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DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

Contemporary Art from Pakistan: A Continual Process of
Reconstructed Pasts and Anticipated Futures

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, im April, 2011

Studienkennzahl:

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt:

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

A 092 315

Kunstgeschichte

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ebba Koch

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1 PREFACE

My interest and fascination for Pakistani arts was awakened while attending a lecture course on Islamic painting held by Professor Ebba Koch at the University of Vienna in June 2000. She started with the wall paintings in Qusayr Amra, Jordan, which date back to the second quarter of the eighth century, and ended by showing slides of contemporary miniature paintings that she had seen in Lahore recently. I was intrigued and asked her to tell me more. She suggested that I meet her in Lahore, Pakistan, which I did in March, 2001.

Having theretofore studied mainly European art history I had, nevertheless, tried to attend lectures on non-Western and Islamic topics. The ornaments, architecture, two-dimensionality, and history of Islam—all of this became of great interest to me. A nine-month research scholarship in Rome eventually opened up more doors to this subject.

After extensive research trips to Pakistan every year since 2000, I was able to hand in my first compilation: A general analysis about the country's visual arts, and in particular, an investigation into the conditions leading to the revival of the miniature painting tradition in Lahore. My Masters thesis, "Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New,"¹ was, from the beginning, intended to be the first step in a series of investigations and writings on the state of art in Pakistan and South Asia respectively.

In short, my fascination grew every day and prompted me to return in December 2001 and stay until March 2002 to carry out research for my thesis. Trying to comprehend a culture that is so rooted in its various ancient traditions, yet politically only a little over fifty years old, has been difficult. Nevertheless, it has made me realise that contemporary art contains no borders.

¹Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, thesis, (Innsbruck: 2002, Universität).

On the contrary, its expressiveness is more global and therefore more universally understandable than international economic relations, for example. Contingent on this universality in art is the Western audience's allowance of non-Western contemporary art to develop impartially. In relation to this, I refer to Western expectations of "arts from the periphery" and how they expect to see traditional styles in art works.

This paper is the result of work researched and written from July 2000 to August 2002 and then again from August 2002 to March 2010. I am grateful to Professor Ebba Koch, who took me under her care, for creating a space for dialogues across disciplines, for providing constant advice and references, for being available at all times, for opening up so many doors and introducing me to numerous people that made my studies possible, and for being an enthusiast on the arts and culture of the subcontinent.

Professor F. T. Bach, my second supervisor, has directed my attention to details which I would not have thought of without his recommendation. His seminars that I have been able to attend were all very informative and instructive for my paper. I particularly enjoyed the discourse on fundamental problems in art history.

Professor Bianca Maria Alfieri, from the Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza," looked after me while I was doing research and helped me tackle the great stock of literature on Islamic art that lies in various libraries across the city. I am also grateful to Robert Skelton in London, who answered and commented on many of my questions.

Without the help of Mona at my home in Vienna it would have been impossible to devote so much time to my work, spend so much time at my office, since I am a dedicated mother of two small children.

In Pakistan, I had the wonderful fortune of being accommodated by Sheherezade Alam and her family, Surayya and Mahmood Alam, and Asad Alam. Being treated like a family member with the love, warmth, and friendliness that one encounters so rarely—and if so, only in the East—made it difficult for me to leave. Special thanks go to Sheherezade Alam, widow of Zahoor ul Akhlaq, who spent hours engaging me in stimulating discussions, made works

by Zahoor ul Akhlaq available to me, introduced me to Pakistan through wonderful people and travels, and who is largely responsible for my enthusiasm for the country.

I want to thank Salima Hashmi for her great support that has carried me on since we first met in March 2001. At the National College of Arts, my gratitude goes to Dr. Durre S. Ahmed, who has exposed me to a different view on the arts of Pakistan. Bashir Ahmed has taken the time to make me understand what the training at the miniature painting department today means.

Acknowledgements and thank-yous go to: Huma Mulji, Bani Abidi, David Alesworth, Nurjahan Akhlaq, Jahangri, Birgit, Shamim, Javed, Sadik and the families of 90 Upper Mall-Lahore, Shaban and Kristine Alam, Kathleen Kisting Alam, Naazish Ataullah, Niilofur Farrukh, Mehdi Hasnain, Marjorie Husain, Nayyer Jamil and family, Sajjad Kausar, Durriya Kazi, Aisha Khalid, Nighat and Imran Mir, Quddus Mirza, Tazeen Qayyum, Ayessha Quraishshi, Imran Qureshi, Shahzia Sikander, Masooma Syed, Ghazala Rahman, Rashid Rana, Mubarika Salamat, Zarina Iqbal Salamat, artists, friends, and all those people that I came to meet in Pakistan.

I am grateful to the friends and colleagues who have sustained my ideas along the way. My family's support is precious: This includes my patient partner Randi, who on rare occasions only, carefully asks me when I intend to finish my studies but ultimately encourages me to live out my ideas; my mother, who is less patient, yet whose prodding keeps me from procrastinating; and my children Maximilian and Ginevra, to whom this work is dedicated.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Title and Definition

When we talk about making art in Pakistan, this indicates the production, distribution, and reception of artistic items within a nationally- (and politically-) defined geographic space. The chosen time frame, 1947 – 2010, refers to the country's sixty years of existence and therefore to what we today call Pakistan. Although, for reasons to be explained, it is necessary to look back in time and trace the artistic development of some major artists of both Muslim and Hindu religions, as well as to look at the cultural climate under colonial rule prior to the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, known simply as Partition. This is because a growing Indian nationalism in art, which had started around 1905 with the Bengal renaissance, also nurtured a certain Muslim resistance to making art. And most of all, the time prior to Partition—and here again, I have to refer to the Bengal renaissance—was such a pluralistic situation, where literary, social, and religious intellectual ideas fused, that it had a far-reaching effect on the arts of the subcontinent.

Geographically, Pakistan borders Iran to the west and Afghanistan to the northwest; the People's Republic of China to the north (the border with Kashmir), India to the east, and the Arabian Sea to the south. (Fig. 1) The nation of Pakistan can be defined alongside its guaranteed and disputed borders of 1947 and 1971 respectively. Disputed are the borders in Jammu and Kashmir, both contested by Pakistan; India claims legal right not only to Jammu and Kashmir but to the northern areas, which are administered separately from Azad Kashmir. This ongoing dispute has often been used by artists to create critical works of art. Roohi Ahmed's Kashmir series clearly draws upon the problems involved in this issue (Fig. 2 and 3), where one is never sure which line represents actual geodetic data. Roohi Ahmed in an interview about this work said:

“This work is an outcome of an earlier work titled Hey+Meem=HUM, which was a comment on the neighborly geographical location of Pakistan and India. It was part of an exchange between artists of Pakistan and India to be exhibited in public places instead of galleries. In this work I had shown Kashmir as neither a part of India nor Pakistan but as a questioned territory. The work was sent back, because for the Indians Kashmir was very much a part of India up to the Gilgit agency which for the Pakistanis is very much a part of Pakistan.”²

² Roohi Ahmed, from a personal interview with the artist in Karachi, March, 2003.

This led the artist question the actual boundaries and the imposed ones, both physical and non-physical, existent and non existent. In addition, as if to resonate with this artist's work, the Pakistani view and the Indian view of this political and geographic conflict is acknowledged in a 2009 edition of Le Monde diplomatique (Fig. 4).

In 1947, Pakistan was comprised of two parts which were millions of miles apart.³ What is today known as Pakistan was then known as West Pakistan, and what is today known as Bangladesh was then known as East Pakistan. So when talking about Pakistan, one can not only refer to its national territory of today, but has to acknowledge the large cultural space out of which it has been carved and by which it is surrounded and made up. The national territory of Pakistan brings with it a variety of tribes, cultures, and languages, as well as the legacy of British colonization. The diverse West Pakistan was opposed to the more homogenous East Pakistan, where 95-98% of the population are Bengalis speaking Bengali (Bangla). Although Urdu is Pakistan's official language, it is the mother tongue in only a small area. According to the last census in 1998, Urdu is the mother tongue for 7.6% of the population.⁴ The major languages of Pakistan are Punjabi (44.2%), Paschtu (Pushto 15.4%), Sindhi (14.1%), and Siraiki (10.5%),⁵ English is the official language of business, government, and higher education. Despite the fact that 97% of Pakistan's inhabitants are Muslims⁶ —the official name Islāmī Jumhūriya (Gamhūriyah) Pākistān refers to The Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In general though, it has to be acknowledged that, culturally, Pakistan shares a lot of its customs and traditions with the Subcontinent, and those may be of various religious backgrounds, indigenous cultures, popular cultures, and, last but not least, British colonial influence.

When talking of a Pakistani cultural identity, one has to consider the great neighbouring cultures (Iran and India), as well as all the modernizing trends that have influenced the country before and after Partition. In the constant state of uncertainty about the political and cultural definition of the country, alternations between parliamentary governments and military rule have been a feature of Pakistani life. In the process, military and political leaders have wooed the more orthodox classes for support. Therefore the nation has become increasingly Islamic. The 1990s brought freedom from overt censorship and a reduction of other controls on intellectuals and creative artists. Yet, the return to democracy was of short

³West and East Pakistan are 1,600 km apart

⁴From: Munzinger, Pakistan, Munzinger-Archiv/Internationales Handbuch 23/04.

⁵Ibidem.

⁶Mostly Sunni's, 15-20% Shia

duration. Towards the end of the decade, the country was ruled by the military again. Another threat on society was the increasing militancy within the country, as well as the spread of the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Vis à vis India and the strong Indian identity, Pakistan's young generation of artists has been able to free themselves from national constraints (until recently Pakistan's art scene has worked more or less unnoticed by the international art market) and develop a fresh and self-confident sense of identity that is not limiting art production (as can be seen, in some cases, within the strong neighbouring cultures). A specific characteristic of Pakistan's art is that almost all of the known artists belong to or are associated with institutions like the National College of Arts (NCA), the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVSAA), or the new Beaconhouse National University (BNU). This fertile involvement and collaboration has made an essential contribution to raising Pakistani art to where it is today. Contemporary art from Pakistan has long since shed the status as a hidden treasure that has not yet been discovered by the global art world. Yet, it owes some of this attention to the booming art market in India, which has been attracting more and more art buyers and curators, and has also led some of the international art crowd to visit Pakistan. Being an artist in a Third World Muslim country today has some meaning in the international art world. Is this a burden or is this to the artists' advantage? How do artists deal with it? This and such other questions will be scrutinized through the investigations of relevant art works.

The first chapter about the brief history of art in Pakistan is intended to give the reader an overview of how modern art came into being within the context of the traumatic formation of the new state of Pakistan. In order to trace the trajectories of the first artists living and working in Pakistan, it is necessary to step back in time and draw a picture of what happened within the undivided South Asian subcontinent around the turn of the last century. The reinterpretation of Mughal miniature paintings through artists such as Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894-1975) is still being investigated today, even though he had no immediate followers. Further light is being shed on artists whose work can be understood as groundbreaking, relevant not only to the visual culture of Pakistan, but to that of the globalised world today. In many ways, these individual artists enacted a critical dialogue with nationalism and metropolitan modernism at the same time. Muslim aesthetics such as calligraphy (and to a lesser extent, the ornament) were increasingly investigated from the late 1940s well into the 1970s and beyond by artists not only in Pakistan, but throughout the

Muslim world: North Africa, Khartoum, the Middle East, South Asia, Pakistan and Indonesia. Attempts made towards a calligraphic modernism were soon manipulated for political means—that is, a badly-needed national identity became undermined by national modern art. The regime sought to underline state ideology with cultural identity and found that Islamic calligraphy, in fact, served best for this purpose. The official emphasis of calligraphy compelled many artists to this Islamic tradition, yet brought about a variety of creative developments within this genre. “For many contemporary artists, who were humbled by state marketing, the calligraphic tradition was not only seen as an exemplification of the identity of an Islamic State, but also an abstract form. In that sense, it was seen as a valid modern expression, just as other imported ideas.”⁷ Some key artists who successfully helped develop this trend shall be discussed.

In the 1990s, Pakistani art shed the burden of the past and started presenting itself as more varied than ever. Pakistan’s urban realm was tremendously diverse and suffused with visual codes that provided the artists with a great deal of potential for their ideas. In this context, history and tradition were competing with modern technology and contemporary lifestyles. Together with contemporary economic, political, and social tensions—both local and global—artists found their creative inspirations.

The 1990s were a prosperous time for the visual arts in Pakistan. In retrospect it seems that after Zia ul Haq’s repressive regime, the art world stepped out of a dark age to shed light on every street corner. Although in the 1990s Karachi faced brutal communal riots and was burdened like no other city in Pakistan with political divisions, it is from there that an investigation of life on the streets by artists took shape. A group of artists started interacting with the city of Karachi, exploring aspects of popular visual culture, and incorporating it into the mechanisms of so called “high art.” While this interaction took on notions of a true engagement with social reality, at the same time, it fostered an understanding and evaluation for a living past that the tiny elite art world had not had any affiliations with thus far. The dynamics of popular visual culture, as this group of artists came to discover, lay in its authenticity outside conventional art practice, which had its roots in Western modernism and gallery culture. In the chapter, “Aspects of Popular Visual Culture in the context of Fine Art,” this unique undertaking will be looked at. Particular attention will be drawn to the

⁷See: Simone Wille, op.cit., p. 19.

consequences of the “Popular Art Movement,” which visibly influenced Pakistan's art scene of the late 1990s.

Another notable trend that developed into a remarkable art movement in the 1990s was nurtured at Lahore's prestigious National College of Art (NCA). The miniature tradition, regarded by Pakistan as its exclusive Mughal heritage, was revived and incorporated into Pakistan's oldest and most established art institution, the NCA at Lahore. The establishment of the present department took place during Zia ul Haq's regime (1977-1988). The resurgence of both calligraphy and miniature painting was born out of a response to Western art and served to represent an Islamic, as well as local, heritage.⁸ This development coincided with the settling in of the post-modern era⁹ as well as “the revival of non-Western cultures throughout the world”¹⁰, as Huntington argues. But the revival of the miniature tradition also ran the risk of succumbing to a nostalgia for the Mughals—for a past, pre-colonial, pre-Western world. The chapter on miniature painting is intended to lay out a clear picture of how the tradition of illustrating books was established around 1200 and was continually fostered into becoming the painting practice under the Great Mughals, which helped, not only to establish their rule, but to revolutionize the Indian painting style in an unprecedented way, amalgamating Persian, Central Asian, Indian, and European painting traditions. Artists in the late nineteenth century and all throughout the twentieth century drew inspiration from this particular traditional genre. Some have looked at its spacial concept, others were fascinated by its narrative components, and others have investigated its linear structures or methods of layering. This, however, imposes upon this tradition a certain kind of timelessness and turns it into an exciting medium to engage with. The list of artists working with aspects of the miniature tradition is long. I have mentioned those artists that I find most influential in carrying on this trend. The difference between Indian and Pakistani artists with reference to the miniature tradition is mostly that for the Indian artist the miniature tradition is part of the many inherited visual traditions that they can refer to; whereas in Pakistan, referencing the past has become a limited undertaking for ideological reasons. In my thesis, I refer to the miniature project as the new miniature painters and point to artists who avoid nostalgia and offer an example by demonstrating that the potential in exploring the many facets of this genre is not yet exhausted.

⁸See: Simone Wille, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁹In terms of figurative art.

¹⁰Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

Furthermore, particular attention has been paid to Zahoor ul Akhlaq, since his scrutinizing of the countries' traditions became an example which was followed by a number of young artists who have become successful internationally. Akhlaq's contribution to the evolution of art in Pakistan demands to be recognized for forming a dialogue with the past, the present, and the future in an unprecedented way for Pakistan's artistic landscape.

Alongside the dynamics undertaken in Karachi and Lahore, a young and enthusiastic group of artists came into being. Mainly based in the cities of Lahore and Karachi, these artists began to speak an unspoiled language, reflecting national and regional developments as well as endorsing themselves into globalising trends that were brought to them via new technologies like the internet; or that they discovered themselves on increasing travel opportunities. This new generation of Pakistani artists is transforming cultural life increasingly with their creative output.¹¹ Some have chosen to live in diaspora, while others have returned to live in their homeland. Perhaps the most famous member of the new generation of artists living in diaspora is Shahzia Sikander. Based in New York City for almost two decades now, she has had a different lifestyle which has, since the 1990s, equipped her with an objective and critical gaze towards her country of origin. The fact that she is residing in a transnational space beyond Pakistan has allowed her to be critical about what is going on in either place. This thriving between two cultures has generally forced artists in diaspora into the roles of building bridges across cultures by the "inbetweenness" of their own position. The majority of young artists referred to in this paper live and work in Pakistan. Their work differs greatly from those living entirely in diaspora because of their different cultural positions. Yet, what makes those positions relevant in evaluating the state of Pakistani art today is that they all individually shed light on a national visual culture that is only a little over sixty years old and has—through great difficulties—managed to bring about a young and creative generation of artists that self-consciously interrogate the present and the past; and point towards a future in an anticipatory manner.

Pakistan is politically a young country just a little over 50 years old which shares most of the history of the modern art movement with predominantly Hindu India. Partition from India and the birth of Pakistan in 1947 led to a reassessment of traditional values and the adoption of western aesthetics. In the quest for originally modern Pakistani art, many artists experienced

¹¹This creative output is visible in fields such as music, film, and photography as well.

an identity crisis. In addition, after three wars with India and three periods of military rule, the country is still under the influence of feudalism, fundamentalism, and related phenomena.

Two periods of military dictatorship defined Pakistan's cultural direction. Under the first era of martial law, during the reign of Ayub Khan (1958-1969), cultural politics were somewhat liberal and pro-modernist. The second military regime though, under Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), came to influence the art world in such a way that state ideology became associated with cultural identity. The emerging Islamisation revolted against expressions of modernism. Figurative works were discouraged while Islamic calligraphy was emphasised. The country's problematic ties with Islam—its ideology, its law, and indeed even the naming of the country as "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan"—has been a growing concern to artists. A closer look will be taken at the key works of artists undertaking investigation into such matters.

Interestingly, it was during the time of Islamisation that the figurative genre of miniature painting was encouraged. The revival of the traditional miniature genre in Pakistan is an excellent example of an art form that was state-sponsored in order to draw out a homogeneous ethnicity and culturally unique identity.

When talking about art from a young Third World nation one cannot avoid addressing issues of identity. The quest for a badly-needed cultural identity became one of the major issues for whoever was in power and artists had to deal with the concept of identity-building because they had to position themselves nationally and internationally. However, what became a burden for the first two generations of artists in Pakistan was successfully stripped off by the following generation. The young artists of Pakistan today still address issues of identity but without guilt. The discourse on identity now is instead substituted with an analysis of ideology, and reflects on contemporary art and culture in relation to politics, capital and class struggle, and new institutional forms of direct or indirect expropriation. The chapter, "In Quest Of a Badly-Needed Identity," will juxtapose some key art works from the first two generations, pointing explicitly towards this problem with works that have recently tackled this issue.

2.2 Along the Global Art Path

Contemporary art from Pakistan has long since shed the status of being an insider tip. Artists like Rashid Rana, Bani Abidi, Huma Mulji, Hamra Abbas, Naiza Khan, and the New York resident, Shahzia Sikander, to mention only a few, are well-established on the international art market. Artists are partaking not only in country survey shows but also in well-curated international shows and biennales all along the global art path. While country survey shows are always at risk of placing art from an often non-Western country in a secluded space, it can also be successful in showing recent trends. Some of the recent and more interesting country survey shows featuring Pakistan alone or together with neighbouring countries will be mentioned here: The 2009 Venice Biennale showed a number of Pakistani artists' work. East-West-Diván featured contemporary art from Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan; and was shown at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia. Playing with a broad range of references which bring together Pop art and Shi'ite shrines—modernist abstraction and Islamic architecture—the exhibition reflected on how culture and history can co-exist with today's globalised, melting-pot society. The title of the exhibition was taken from a collection of poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was inspired by the Persian poet, Hafez, and refers to the “divan,” or council chamber, as a physical symbol of the coming together of different cultures. The Asia Society in New York showed Hanging Fire from September 2009 to January 2010 and was the first U.S. museum exhibition devoted to contemporary art from Pakistan. Salima Hashmi curated the show and referred the title to “an idiom that evokes the idea of delaying judgment, in this case, particularly based on assumptions or preconceived notions about contemporary society and artistic expression in Pakistan.”¹² Another show devoted to contemporary art from Pakistan was put together by Rashid Rana with works from the Gurgaon-based Devi Foundation's own collection of contemporary art from Pakistan in January 2010. The exhibition, ResembleReassemble, conveyed a representative impression of the dynamism and diversity of art created in Pakistan. All the art works in the exhibition were created in the last 10 years by members of the younger and youngest generation of artists. The exhibition was a clear confirmation that Pakistani art has successfully involved itself with issues that reach far beyond national identity.

In terms of art market trends, it can be stated that the famous auction houses are regularly selling Pakistani artists' work with prizes reaching far into the hundred thousands.

¹²Hanging Fire. Contemporary Art From Pakistan, (New York: Asia Society, 2009), Book Cover

Within this new and so-called global exhibition market, “a subtle system of inclusion and exclusion”¹³ is taking place. Today, more than ever, artists are assimilating other histories and art practices, which has led, from the capitalist First World point of view, to cannibalization.¹⁴ From the vantage point of the Third World, this has led to freely appropriating internationalism as well as regionalism. Because artists are refocusing on the uniqueness of their cultural identity and appropriating as well as rejecting globalizing trends, some of the most interesting art is coming out of the Asian region today. Contemporary art today is a product of “cultural syncretism,”¹⁵ as Apinan Poshyananda puts it in his essay on the contemporary art of Thailand, and it therefore cannot be fully understood by looking through the “windows” of the “Euro-American paradigm.”¹⁶

2.3 Pakistan’s Cultural Environment

2.3.1 Museums

In 2007, with considerable delay, Islamabad proudly opened the approximately five-million-euro National Art Gallery (NAG), Islamabad (Fig. 5). The design for the gallery was approved almost two decades ago, but successive Pakistani governments with competing ideas were able, again and again, to stop the project from being completed. It was the country's President and General, Pervez Musharraf, whose personal intervention led to the gallery's final completion. However, not without political turmoil, the gallery had to compete with the ideas of the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) to turn parts of the gallery spaces over to performing artists until their planned National Theatre was completed. As a result, the final opening and its inaugural exhibition received reviews from local and international press. Courageously, thirteen curators from across Pakistan gathered works that approached themes such as the depiction of nudes and the questioning of traditional values and respect for authority. “Official censorship, in the form of a specially appointed panel, has negotiated the boundaries between intellectual support for freedom of expression and the

¹³Marina Gržinić, “Re-Politicizing Art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology”, Publications of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, VI. 6, (Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2008), p.13.

¹⁴See: Marina Gržinić, Re-Politicizing Art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology, Publications of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, VI. 6, (Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2008), p.13.

¹⁵Apinan Poshyananda, “The development of contemporary art of Thailand”, Tradition and Change. Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific, Caroline Turner (ed.), (Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1993) pp. 93-106.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 93-106.

inherently conservative nature of Pakistani society at large, and has for once erred on the side of generosity. Several factors contributed to this victory for liberal forces in the local art scene, including the powerful advocacy of figures such as the painter and educator Salima Hashmi, the collective and vocal support of artists through internet petitioning, and the visible and undeniably attractive recent development of contemporary art markets in South Asia.”¹⁷ Although “the creation of a 'National' gallery in an era when the idea of nationhood is increasingly fragile”¹⁸ is a risky proposition, this occasion can be seen as a unique opportunity for Pakistan to frame not only its own history of visual art but the whole discourse of nation and belonging, which can be interrogated within Pakistan’s specific cultural context.

The NAG is the only state-run contemporary institution. There is, however, a number of museums to be found across the country. Karachi houses the National Museum of Pakistan and the Flag Staff House Museum. In Lahore, there is the Armoury Museum at the Old Fort, the Faqirkhana Museum, the Chughatai Museum, the Shakir Ali Museum, the Arts & Craft Museum, the Science Museum, the Allama Iqbal Museum, Javed Manzil, the Mughal and Sikh Galleries at the Lahore-Fort, and the Lahore Museum. Islamabad also houses the Natural History Museum and the Lok Virsa (Folk Heritage) Museum. Moenjodaro has an Archaeological Museum and the Moenjodaro Museum. Banbhore has an Archaeological Museum. Omerkot, Tharparkar also has its own Archaeological Museum. Hyderabad Fort, Hyderabad has another Archaeological Museum and a University Museum. Bahawalpur has the Bahawalpur Museum. In Sindh, Jamshoro there is the Sindhology Museum at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. In Quetta there is the Quetta Museum. In Peshawar there are two Museums: the Peshawar Museum and the University Museum. In Chakdara, NWFP there is the Chakdara Museum. In Saidu Sharif, Swat there is the Archaeological Museum. Both Taxila and Harappa have their own Archaeological Museums. Sialkot has the museum-cum-library at Iqbal Manzil.

2.3.2 Galleries

Pakistan has a small but active gallery scene in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Some twenty commercial contemporary art galleries show regularly, but these exhibitions are usually on display for only two weeks. An insufficient web presence results in a limited impact.

¹⁷Adnan Madani, „Museums, Academies and Barracks: The Inauguration of the National Art Gallery in Pakistan“, in: http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2007/national_art_gallery_pakistan/.

¹⁸Ibidem.

According to the international artists' collective, "Vasl,"¹⁹ Karachi lists some 28 commercial galleries; Lahore, 18; Islamabad, 6; and Peshawar, 2. Amongst the newer and younger commercial galleries, the *grey noise art gallery* in Lahore can be mentioned for its international networking as well as for its curatorial approach.

The commercial scene is augmented by some non-profit spaces, most of them situated in Karachi, although Lahore's gallery scene has lately seen some dynamic additions. The twenty-year-old VM Art Gallery in Karachi, run by the Rangoonwala Foundation, provides a space for artists to show unusual and (in Pakistan) often unsellable work such as video art and installations. The two-year-old Commune Artist Colony in Karachi is a converted warehouse and offers multi-purpose exhibition and performance facilities. The non-profit Foundation for Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA), which is working with the Defense Housing Authority (DHA) and the Heritage Foundation on a planned museum complex in Karachi, operates *FOMMA-DHA Art Centre*. It is located in a refurbished nineteenth-century barrack and has an active publication program. Critic Salwat Ali's Journey of the Spirit: Pakistan Art in the New Millennium and an Asian-edition of Third Text were published in 2008. Lahore houses the Alhambra Arts council which increasingly shows exciting art works. An artist-run and non-profit organization worth mentioning is Vasl, which is affiliated with the London-based *Triangle Arts Trust*. It regularly hosts national and international artists' residencies with accompanying exhibitions in Karachi. In Lahore, it has organized a series of public interventions, the latest of which was the second edition of "13 Satellites," documented and presented at the Annemarie Schimmel Haus. Vasl offers a variety of facilities and publishes an online newsletter.

2.4 Art Education

In terms of art education, the country offers a variety of possibilities. There is the prestigious National College of Art (NCA) in Lahore; the Institut of Art & Design at the University of Punjab in Lahore; followed by the IVS Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi; and the University of Karachi, which houses its own department of Visual Studies. Karachi also houses the Karachi School of Art and the North City School of Art. The School of Visual Arts at Beaconhouse National University (BNU) has recently added competition to Lahore's art educational field. Hunerkada School of Art operates both in Lahore and Islamabad.

¹⁹From a conversation with Vasl founding member Naiza Khan, Dec. 2009. See also: www.vasart.org

Finally, there are art departments at the Peshawar University and the University of Bahawalpur

2.5 Methodology

The art world in Pakistan during the past fifteen to eighteen years has been characterised by change on all levels of life. Focusing on this time period in this paper is not meant to declare a historical trend or to list the top ranking art works produced during that time. It is not meant to focus on the quantitative increase in the production of art without any sufficient or critical commentary on the right evaluation of the work; nor is it meant to address the increasing international attention towards Pakistani art and the lack of a cultural underground scene. On the contrary, its purpose is to present a synopsis of a nation in transition, whose social, economic, and political changes have become the catalyst for contemporary art practices.

One of the most important changes of the 1990s was the detachment of artists and intellectuals from their dependence on the West while implicitly searching for their own roots. Within the cultural climate of the 1990s, wherein people managed to divest themselves of the post-colonial phase, dealing with identity became much more relaxed and flexible: In their function as social seismographs artists have now developed a sense of their own location within a complex global system and have begun to draw connections beyond frontiers and time zones. Without fearing a deficiency in originality, these young artists have very consciously made use of every device possible in order to reach the desired goal. Inherited post-colonial disadvantages are only there to strategically develop their theoretical, ideological, and artistic standpoints.

In this thesis, I will draw attention in particular to a number of artists and artistic developments that represent a continuum within Pakistan's art history, as well as several distinctly individual, national, and regional modernities and post-modernities. Some of the artists mentioned in this paper have developed a global reputation, while others have not yet been discovered. During my eleven years of engagement with Pakistan and its art scene, I have had the chance to meet a large number of artists and creative individuals. However, I have only selected a small number of artists for this paper. This does not mean that I do not

value the artists' work not mentioned here. For reasons of clarity and sometimes for reasons of accessibility of visual material, I was forced to make limited choices.

I have been carrying out research for this paper since 1999. In 2002, I handed in my Master's thesis at the University of Innsbruck: Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New.²⁰ I see this Doctoral thesis as a continuation and partly as a refinement of the previous paper. Therefore, I have integrated parts of my earlier research and writings, evaluating it anew with greater articulation. In particular, I have used aspects of my previous thesis work when writing on the artists, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Shahzia Sikander, Imran Qureshi, and Aisha Khalid.

2.6 State of Research

Since writing my Master's thesis between 1999 and 2001, a number of new publications dedicated to Pakistani art have surfaced. In addition, three forthcoming publications in 2010 are an indication of the value given to the development of art in Pakistan. Due to the wide and international circulation of Pakistani art today, a number of gallery publications, exhibition catalogue entries, and articles have appeared. A few early publications and some of the more valuable, newer publications, exhibition catalogues, and articles are mentioned below.

Although Jalaluddin Ahmed's 1954 survey, Art in Pakistan, was compiled too early, it is nevertheless an important source for the initial development of art in Pakistan. Marcella Nesom Sirhandi's book, Contemporary Painting in Pakistan, published in 1992, is still a valuable source in terms of names and dates, and serves as an overview for the development of painting. Furthermore, it touches upon the topic of the relationship of art to the socio-political changes within the country. Akbar Naqvi's 1998 book, Image and Identity: Fifty Years of Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan, the first attempt at writing a history of art in Pakistan, compiles extensive information. It is a pity he did not touch upon the important art developments occurring especially in the 1990s, and it is a pity he is so subjective and judgemental about art and artists in general. Pakistan: Another Vision, edited by Timothy

²⁰Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, thesis, (Innsbruck: 2002, Universität).

Wilcox on the occasion of the corresponding exhibition in 2000, tries to present the then-current artistic production in the context of earlier works.

With its few pages on modern art in Pakistan, Partha Mitter's 2001 book, Indian Art, proves to be a valuable source for tracing the evolution of artistic style, content, and philosophical trends in the context of the subcontinent. This work reveals very clearly that the study of Indian art—perhaps more than any other non-European artistic tradition—is steeped in Western art historical concepts. I see Pakistan as caught in the traps that neglect the role and function of art in the society itself, which is just as Mitter sees India. Mitter's pioneering work of postcolonial debate, Much Maligned Monsters, published in 1977, is indispensable, for he was the first to discuss the history of European reactions to Indian art. A pioneering study of modern art on the Indian subcontinent is Mitter's Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922, first published in 1994; and his latest book, The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde 1922-1947, published in 2007. Geeta Kapur's essays in When Was Modernism (2000) seek to situate the modern in contemporary cultural practice. The way she sets up an ideological vantage point to view modernism along its multiple tracks in India and the Third World allowed me to trace parallels with the situation in neighbouring Pakistan.

Salima Hashmi's articles, press releases, and entries in exhibition catalogues are valuable sources on the development of art since the 1990s. They were of great importance to my research, not least for her empathy towards the concerns of the young artists, being herself an artist, teacher, and curator. In 2002, Salima Hashmi published Unveiling the Visible: Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan. The book is a collection of personal interviews with female artists. In 2007, Salima Hashmi, together with Yashodhara Dalmia, published Memory, Metaphor, Mutations: Contemporary Art of India and Pakistan. Salima Hashmi writes about Pakistan's art since Partition and presents an overview of how the dynamic of the new miniature painters came into being.

Virginia Whiles' own research on contemporary miniature painting, so far presented in articles, contained very valuable information that relate socio-anthropological matters to the development of the genre.

Iftikhar Dadi's research on Islamic visual cultures and urban crafts has been inspiring and helpful. He has sent me some of his discussions and research on "Calligraphic Modernism"

but I have independently (prior to getting a hold of his papers) done research in the same direction. Adnan Madani's critical interpretations of artists' work adds yet another dimension on how to view works being created in the brief history of visual art in Pakistan.

The pioneering artist Shahzia Sikander's success in the United States has brought about gallery publications, exhibition folders, and various interviews. The 1999 publication by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago on the occasion of an exhibition of Sikander's work reprinted an interview on her by Homi Bhabha, "Chillava Klatch," as well as an article by Faisal Devji, "Translated Pleasures." Both articles are valuable for tracing Sikander's own artistic career. The catalogue also contains a variety of information on the development of contemporary miniature painting and explains difficulties that a traditional medium encounters when entering the Western mainstream. Vishakha N. Desai's publication, Conversations with Traditions, accompanied the exhibition of works by Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander that were presented at the Asia Society in 2001/2002. The exhibition catalogue's text deals with a topic that represents artistic concerns in formerly-colonized Third World countries.

Regarding Shahzia Sikander's work and her transnational status, an excellent exhibition catalogue should be mentioned: Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists, accompanying the correspondent exhibition (2004-2005), travelled from the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois to the Louisiana State University Museum of Art to the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, and ended at the Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Sikander is also featured in Fresh Talk Daring Gazes (2003), a book compiling a series of conversations on identity with respect to Asian-American artists. The book is valuable for introducing a fresh look at cultural studies. Alongside the first European museum exhibition of Shahzia Sikander's work, the Irish Museum of Modern Art published a beautifully-printed and well-researched catalogue in 2007.

Karkhana: A Contemporary Collaboration was published in 2006 in conjunction with the corresponding exhibition. It is an excellent documentation about a miniature project/collaboration undertaken by six young practitioners.

Roger Connah's 2000 book, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, is rather subjective and emotional, but there is information about the artist's life and death and most of the small, carefully-produced 109-page book is devoted to illustrations of Akhlaq's work.

In 2005, on the occasion of the exhibition, the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai published Beyond Borders: Art of Pakistan with a variety of articles. Other exhibition catalogues worth mentioning are: Subcontinent: The Indian Subcontinent in Contemporary Art, Turin, 2006; Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen, Berlin/Stuttgart, 2005; Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art From Pakistan, New York, 2009; and ResembleReassemble, Gurgaon, 2010.

International Art Magazines such as “Art Asia Pacific,” “Bidoun, Art Flash,” and the online art magazine, www.universes-in-universe, to name but a few, frequently cover Pakistani artists' work. Pakistan's only art magazine, “Nukta,” is primarily devoted to Pakistan's visual arts. In Karachi, Fomma, the Foundation for Museum of Modern Art, has started to publish monographs. Marjorie Husain's 2003 book with Fomma on Ali Imam: Man of the Arts is one in a series of forthcoming publications of such a kind.

In my interpretation, I was also inspired from Ebba Koch's essay, “The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting,” published in 1997. The connection of old and new and therefore its subsequent contemporary relevance has been revealed to me in this study. The way Shah-Jahan selectively introduced two antagonistic idioms of representation—the linear and the three-dimensional—became a form of structuralism that inspired artists like Zahoor ul Akhlaq centuries later.

Meanwhile, I would like to mention some of my own publications on art in Pakistan: I have curated and edited the exhibition catalogue, *Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen*, ifa Gallerie, Berlin and Stuttgart, Oct. 2005 - May 2006. I have also contributed catalogue essays for the exhibitions *Love it or Leave it*, “Lost in Translation: Hamra Abbas,” at the 5th Cetinje Biennial, Balkan Trilogie, Cetinje/Dubrovnik/Tirana, 2004; National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, exhibition catalogue, *Beyond Borders: Art of Pakistan*, “Evaluating Identity in Pakistani Art Today: Notes on Identity-in-the-Making”, 2005; VASL, International Residency, Karachi (Pakistan), “Notes on a Karachi Experience”, 2004. For www.universes-in-universe I have written “Pakistani Art at the Devi Art Foundation,” 2010, and in 2007 I wrote “Bani Abidi: When Posing Becomes Intriguing.” “Innovations and Reproductions in Cultures and Society” has been published for the online magazine for cultural sciences Nr. 16, 6.5; “Bare the Fact” has been published on the occasion of Naiza Khan's Mumbai exhibition in 2006. The journal,

kunst und kirche 4/04: *Kunst und Islam*, has published “Kunstentwicklung in Pakistan: Nationalismen und Identitätsbildung unter Einflussnahme des Islam.” Besides these publications for exhibitions, I am a regular contributor to the renowned *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* with articles on contemporary art from Iran, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

The international artists' collective, *Vasl*, runs a website, www.vasart.org, which has occasionally served as a source of information.

Further information is based on interviews with artists, collectors, art journalists, and art historians. While Pakistan lacks professional art criticism, art journalists are well-informed and offered useful information and viewpoints.

Equally important to making background inquiries was the consuming task of compiling an adequate cross-section of visual material. The younger generation of artists usually document their art-making well through CDs or professionally-run websites. Collections from The Lahore Museum, The Pakistan National Council of Arts in Islamabad (PNCA), and private collections inside and outside Pakistan all provided an indispensable source of visual material. However, complete information was not available on all of the paintings.

The early writings on modern art in Pakistan focus mainly on its development in chronological terms, often without analysing the factors that have brought it about. Either general issues or specific problems have been addressed. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to create a synoptical presentation of the arts in Pakistan with specific points of contact to modern and contemporary art in the Western mainstream. By bringing this development into a wider context, I will try to approach the topic from a synthetic point of view. Within the context of this work, I have focused specifically on the historical background of art practices in Pakistan since Partition, and have taken a closer look at pioneering works that have helped prepare the groundwork for art of the younger generations. Particular attention has been paid to the 1990s, which mark a turn in art-making. Two notable historical art movements took place in Karachi and Lahore during the 1990s and have shaped Pakistan's artistic trajectory persistently. I have scrutinized the origins of the revival of miniature painting in both India and Pakistan, with the inclusion of the works of Italian artist, Francesco Clemente. This broader research on the development of works from both India and Pakistan has been undertaken to consequently show the unique dynamics achieved by the new miniature

painters—as I am referring to them in this thesis—in Pakistan. Whether new miniature painting is seen as having an unbroken continuity with tradition—as is often claimed—will be scrutinized in this paper, as well as how far this undertaking can claim to be a purely ideological one. The engagement with urban folk art and the popular visual culture as it was undertaken by a group of artists and art teachers in the city of Karachi, resulted in several influential bodies of work. That the resulting and collaborative works with urban craftsmen such as truck artists and decorators has gone almost unnoticed by the local art crowd makes it even more relevant for a critical discussion.

3 A Brief History of Contemporary Pakistani Art

Concepts of Identity and Nationalism versus Modernism and Postmodernism

3.1 The Beginning

Pakistan's contemporary art scene is made up of three generations of practising artists.

With the British departure from India in 1947, Partition took place and Pakistan was created. In 1947, West and East Pakistan were carved out of the subcontinent, and in 1971 East Pakistan became Bangladesh. The emergence of independent India and Pakistan can be seen as the beginning of the nationalist project for Pakistan. In drafting India's 1950s constitution, Dr. Ambedkar the Untouchable leader declared, "In believing that we are a nation, we are chasing a great delusion. We can only attempt to become a nation in the making."²¹ This declaration can just as well be applied to Pakistan.

Pakistan is a nation in the making. The struggle for national and self-determination that preceded the birth of Pakistan created awareness for traditions that had to be sought out in aesthetic and creative activities. As in other post-colonial countries, the new Pakistan faced a perpetual conflict between old and new, tradition and innovation. Whereas other countries have found some kind of discernible balance between the two through the passage of time, in Pakistan's case, the contrast between the old and the new in the initial years was too prominent to be easily discernible. "The old here is too old and the new, very new,"²² as a Pakistani poet once sang. Today this so-called conflict of old and new is what influences artists' work in an inspiring way.

When writing a history of contemporary art in Pakistan one faces the perpetual problem of where and when to start. Is 1947 the beginning? Or shall one start by tracing the careers of Muslim artists who have been active before Partition in various parts of the undivided subcontinent? It is true that religion caused an ideological division between Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia in the early years of the struggle against colonial rule. In terms of a Muslim artistic expression, this divide can only tentatively be witnessed in artists like Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894-1975) or Allah Bux (1895-1978). Their work prior to Partition took

²¹Cited in Das, A. N., *India Invented: A Nation-in-the-Making*, (New Delhi: n.p., 1994), p.8.

²²See Jalal Uddin Ahmed, *Contemporary Painters of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Arts Council of Pakistan, 1958), p. 17.

on notions of a Punjabi regionalism, and Chughtai did infuse himself with pan-Islamic ideas. Yet to refer to their work as national art is problematic because the founding of Pakistan came later. Conversely, this notion of national art can be traced quite clearly in India.

3.2 Stepping Back in Time: Nationalism and Painting

Certain Hindu expressions of nationalism reflected in art can be seen as early as the second part of the nineteenth century. Here the most remarkable self-taught painter, Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) of the royal family of Travancore, should be mentioned. Varma painted in Victorian-salon style and adopted nineteenth-century historicism, but his allegories depicted indigenous themes such as ancient Indian epics and literary classics. The Triumph of Indrajit (Fig. 6) is a typical example of amalgamating Indian and Western elements. Conventions of the Kathakali dance-drama of Kerala²³ (the province of origin of the painter) are recalled through certain postures and gestures, notably the half-clad woman on the foremost left border and the three male figures, positioned in a triangle occupying the central stage, looking fixedly with their heads erected in various directions. Social differences are expressed through various shades of skin colour: Aristocracy is indicated with a lighter shade, while lower orders are dark-skinned. Likewise the woman of higher rank leaning against a pillar in the background is modestly dressed in a sari and blouse, in contrast to the half-naked woman with the rhetorical gesture. Varma disguises nineteenth-century historicism with Indian subject matter to present the colonial experience of domination. In the words of Mitter, it represents “past history imagined as present melodrama.”²⁴ Contemporary European Orientalists worked with similar codes and addressed such contrasting subjects as social differences and the experience of colonialism.

Ravi Varma mastered history painting with Western illusionism under the influence of colonial aesthetics. Varma's oleographs replaced the reproduction of European paintings, quite fashionable then in colonial India. However significantly, what secured his national reputation was the distribution of cheap prints of his mythological paintings, which were affordable by ordinary people. Some of these oleographs were even used for advertisements. The Death of Jaṭāyu (Fig. 7) was featured on safety matches (Fig.8) and The Birth of Śakuntalā (Fig. 9) was used to promote baby food (Fig. 10).

²³See Partha Mitter, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 205.

²⁴Ibidem.

Politically, Geeta Kapur sees Varma “as an artist dedicated to the emerging national cause of a pan-Indian culture.”²⁵ Of course this must be viewed in relation to the rising nationalist sentiment among the Western-educated intelligentsia towards the end of the nineteenth century. An upsurge of nationalism was particularly vibrant in the state of Maharashtra, to which Varma contributed oleographs of national heroes such as Shivaji, Tilak and Ranade.^{26,27} It was the time of print culture in colonial India, which witnessed a revolution and helped establish the nationalist movement. In order to reach a largely illiterate society, though, both nationalists and communalists made use of cheaply-reproduced images. It is unclear whether it was Varma’s technical skill or his illustrations of Indian poetry and allegory that made him such a popular figure. Just a year after his death, in 1907, the same nascent Hindu nationalists that had praised Varma’s artistic contribution and achievements turned against him, claiming his work as “incompatible with the spirit of Indian nationalism.”²⁸

This Indian nationalism was of a Hindu nature. However, the beginning of Muslim separatism was brought about by “Syed Ahmed Khan’s famous refusal to endorse the then-newly formed Congress during the 1880s.”²⁹ Although this indicates a growing alliance between the pan-Islam movement and Muslim artists, there was also a strong regionalism inherent in their respective works. After Partition, artists in Pakistan who had been previously active often changed subjects but not style; and Hindu mythology and themes were exchanged for pictorial devices that referred either to the Islamic past of the subcontinent (Mughul time), or depicted the neutral field of landscape and genre scenes. This can be seen in the work of established artists such as Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894-1975) and Allah Bux (1895-1978). When Chughtai used to paint Ghalib, Hindu, and Buddhist themes, he started concentrating on depicting Allam Iqbal (Pakistan’s twentieth century poet) and focused on Muslim motifs and on romantic themes after Partition. Hindu and Buddhist themes were not represented anymore in his work. In the early part of his life, Allah Bux was known as the “Krishna Artist” for his mythological depictions of Krishna. After partition, Bux painted Punjabi

²⁵Geeta Kapur, “A Stake in Modernity: Brief History of Contemporary Indian Art”, Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific, Caroline Turner (ed.), (Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), p. 28.

²⁶Partha Mitter, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922, op.cit., p. 204.

²⁷On Shivaji, Tilak and Ranade see: Simone Wille, „Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Biografie und Politik“(Germany, *KomTech Institut*, 2004).

²⁸Partha Mitter, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922, op.cit., p. 221.

²⁹Aijaz Ahmad, Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia, (London: Verso, 2000), p.4.

village life and landscapes. In these works, Hindu themes were exchanged for a so-called nationalistic and therefore Muslim art language.³⁰ Muslim artists who continued to live in Pakistan or who migrated from India to Pakistan found themselves uprooted and facing barren ground. Pakistan's cultural definition had yet to be discovered, though it is worth recalling that one of the oldest civilizations in the world, the Indus Valley civilization, was cradled in the land of the newly-formed Pakistan. According to archaeologists, Harappa, near Islamabad, and Mohenjodaro, situated some two hundred and twenty miles outside Karachi in the Sindh desert, were, the chief cities of an urban civilisation that flourished for almost one thousand years beginning in 2300 B.C. Only a small number of younger artists adapted themes from the Indus Valley Civilization and from the Buddhist Gandharan Period, but in general these experiments were short-lived. Any real and significant shift in art came only from artists whom Akbar Naqvi refers to as the "Pioneers."³¹ This first generation of painters in Pakistan looked to the West for inspiration and began to introduce non-traditional forms of art and cubism.

Let us return to Chughtai and one of his many depictions of Hindu motifs. In Radha Krishna (Fig.11), the dark-skinned Krishna wears a yellow *dhoti*, which would have been the common way of depicting the 8th avatar of Vishnu. His usual flute has however been replaced by a walking stick, garlanded with a lotus; and instead of the traditional peacock feather headdress, Chughtai has adorned Krishna with a loose turban cloth. While the background landscape of the river, the green hills, and the pair of white geese are reminiscent of Kangra miniature painting, the figures of Radha and Krishna are, as Marcella Nesom Sirhandi calls it, "typically Chughtai,"³² Yet many aspects of this exquisite painting keep to the tradition of miniature painting of the region. For example, the cows in the middle of the painting can only be seen by closely peering into the leaves of the trees growing between the architectural features. The animals appear in pairs, as if to complement the main scene with Radha and Krishna—female and male. The architectural setting covers most of the picture-plane. Although it is Mughal in style, the large, sleek, mural surface with the two figures in Chughtai style breaks with the medieval practice of miniature painting and carries it into the contemporary. The traditional miniature style remains a lookout in the far distance, in the landscape scene. The contemporary enters in the forefront of the picture, where the flatness of the architectural

³⁰Motifs from Muslim architecture and geometric tiles were applied to paintings.

³¹Akbar Naqvi, Image and Identity. Fifty Years of Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³²Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, Contemporary Painting in Pakistan, (Pakistan: Ferozsons, 1992), p. 26.

setting executed in a washed, watercolour technique, provides the setting for the two large figures: the main protagonists, who are disproportionately large. Chughtai's style was not a single phenomenon but was closely linked to the developments in Bengal.

3.3 Nationalism, Identity and the Bengal School

Independence movements had corresponding parallels in the arts and literature scene all over the subcontinent, but the most influential and strongest was seen among the intelligentsia in Bengal. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) led the first Indian art movement, called the Bengal school, which was a cultural syncretism of different Asian cultures. Abanindranath was the young nephew of the famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and the Tagores were leading figures in the cultural renaissance in Calcutta. Although Chughtai and Tagore regarded themselves as adversaries, their oriental style and sources, as well as their use of watercolour and the new Bengal school technique of overlay washes (adapted by Chughtai himself), were somewhat similar in the beginning. However, Chughtai emphasized different cultural values and, as a result, it can be said that a Muslim consciousness in art began with Chughtai. He was, apparently, the first painter to have used poetic metaphors from Persian and Urdu poetry in relation to painting.³³ In relation to the Bengal School style, Abdullah Chaghatai named the Lahore exponents of that style, "the Lahore oriental style."³⁴ Representing Chughtai as Lahore's most important painter, he put on a bold front to Calcutta, where the Bengal School was situated, and also to Bombay, where the J.J. School was developing its own reputation as a place where artistic ideas were being cultivated. In this competitive climate, Chughtai initiated something like a Punjabi regionalism by gathering around him a group of painters who were of Muslim and Punjabi origin.³⁵ Nevertheless, research demonstrates that artistic influences came from all directions and were scrutinized and often adapted by individual artists and groups of artists all over the subcontinent, regardless of religious backgrounds.

In addition, examples of artists serving a nationalist aim and working towards the formation of a cultural identity are numerous. For instance, Ravi Varma's unmatched success lay in his

³³Ibid. p. 23.

³⁴Abdullah Chaghatai, *A Century of Painting in the Punjab: 1849-1975*, (Lahore: Kitab Khana-i-Nauraus, 1961), p. 47.

³⁵Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, op.cit., p. 22.

ability to represent the “national cause of a pan-India culture,”³⁶ to borrow a phrase from Geeta Kapur. In opposition to Ravi Varma’s academic oil paintings, the Bengal school emerged out of a collaboration with the young artist, Abanindranath Tagore, and the English art teacher and superintendant, Ernest Binfield Havell (from 1896 to 1906). Havell, an enemy of Victorian materialism, tried to guide the Indian youth towards an indigenous (swadeshi) ideology of art. Havell introduced Abanindranath to the style of the Mughal masters, the Japanese art critic, Kakuzo Okakura Tenshin, his pupils, Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunso, and the delicate lines of Japanese art itself. Cultural resistance to European colonialism was expressed in pan-Asianism by Okakura and his militant ideology.³⁷ Asian spirituality against European materialism was emphasised by this pan-Asianism,³⁸ and was concurrent with the Bengal art scene that worshipped swadeshi ideology and reflected a militant Hindu nationalism. The debate about “Indianness” in the Bengal art scene represented a rejection of both Western and non-Hindu cultures. Despite an occasional rejection of Muslim influence,³⁹ and the contests within Ravi Varma’s academic art, the Bengal school art remained—“within a common vocabulary”—⁴⁰ a variant style for years to come. Out of this climate of Hindu nationalism emerged what Mitter calls, “Muslim nationalism in art.”⁴¹ Referring to Abdur Rehman Chughtai, Mitter considers “the awakening of Muslim political and cultural identity in India” as a “response to Hindu cultural nationalism.”⁴² Chughtai led the Lahore movement, which developed its own variations on themes and techniques partly in response to the swadeshi⁴³ ideology of art that had given Muslims the feeling of being underprivileged. A sense of identity predated British rule, and regional cultural variations not only persisted in the colonial era, but were actually solidified under the impact of the colonial state. The British, according to Ian Talbot, “encouraged Indians to organise themselves in religious communities” for it was a way to make “Indian society more knowable and hence more controllable,”⁴⁴ Yet I believe that what Mitter refers to as Muslim nationalism in the art of Chughtai, must also be seen as a personal vision that

³⁶Geeta Kapur, “A Stake in Modernity: Brief History of Contemporary Indian Art”, Tradition and Change. Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific, Caroline Turner (ed.), (Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), p. 28.

³⁷On other militant ideologies that came out of Japan at the time see: Ian Buruma, Avishai Margalit, Occidentalism. The West in the Eyes of its Enemies, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), pp. 1-12.

³⁸See Partha Mitter, Indian Art, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 170-189.

³⁹See: Geeta Kapur, Indian Art, op. cit. p. 30.

⁴⁰Partha Mitter, Indian Art, op.cit., p. 180.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 180.

⁴²Ibid., p. 181.

⁴³See also Ratnabali Chatterjee, From the Karkhana to the Studio: Changing social Roles of Patron and Artist in Bengal, (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1990) p. 74.

⁴⁴Ian Talbot, India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation, (London: Hodder Headline Group, 2000), p. 30.

singled him out as an imaginative artist.⁴⁵ Chughtai saw himself as a modern painter and considered what he emphasized as a regional, Punjabi, art language, where Mughal and Pahari miniature painting, as well as Urdu and Persian poetry, served as artistic devices rather than political expressions.

In India, the modern project had moved on from the first three decades of the twentieth century, with positions held by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Abanindranath Tagore, to a more serious development in Santiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore. From there Nandalal Bose, Ramkinkar Baij, and Benodebehari Mukherjee took over on different levels. Meanwhile, Paris-trained Amrita Sher-Gil returned and Calcutta-based Jamini Roy found his direction by turning to rural Bengal. On the eve of Independence a number of artists turned towards greater social commitment. At the same time, during the 1940s and 50s, several progressive art groups came into existence. They expressed social justice while rejecting artistic nationalism. Pakistan, meanwhile, seemed cut off from this type of modern development and was forced to reconnect elsewhere.

In the 1920s, Gaganendranath Tagore discovered Cubism and appropriated it according to its decorative possibilities. In Poet Rabindranath on the Island of Birds (Fig.12), we see the use of Cubism in a rather expressionist way. The artist plays with the possibilities of light and shade, ignoring the experiments of Analytical Cubism achieved by Braque and Picasso from 1909-1910, where the idea was to destroy directional lighting to build up illusionism—the greatest historical art innovation since Giotto.

In general, it is important to note that Cubism released unprecedented creative energies as a movement in the early 20th century and led to a huge number of variations which branched into many artistic directions. Tagore clearly made use of the deconstructive aspects of cubist methodology.

⁴⁵See, M. Iqbal, Muraqqa i-Chughtai, (Lahore: n.P., 1928), n.p.

3.4 Colonial Cultural Policies

Considering what has been stated about Chughtai's front to Calcutta and Bombay,⁴⁶ Lahore can be seen as an important location on the subcontinent in terms of art activities. As part of the British cultural policy, the establishment of art schools was initiated with a very precise agenda. The first school, the school of Art and Industry in Madras, was set up in 1850 and was followed by the School of Industrial Art in Calcutta in 1854. That was followed by the Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, set up in 1857, and the Mayo School of Arts at Lahore in 1874.⁴⁷ There were different ideas behind the British policy to construct art schools. Distributing culture and cultural values was part of the colonial agenda to undermine power. Culture follows power,⁴⁸ as Samuel Huntington determines. The conquering of the subcontinent by the British Empire in the 19th century succeeded by superimposing Western ideologies and values on the people of India. The global distribution of its own culture throughout the colonial and post-colonial period has ensured the West's cultural hegemony up to the present day. However, the establishment of the Mayo School of Art and other such institutions also reflected the British cultural ideology of preserving the indigenous habits of the colonized, while at the same time defining a contrasting image of the self through the "other".⁴⁹

According to archives, during the period of 1901 to 1911, under the governance of Percy Brown and Bhai Ram Singh, the Mayo School offered the following courses: lithography,⁵⁰ modelling, perspective drawing, freehand in painting, freehand in brush, freehand from memory, sculpture, goldsmithing, silversmithing, woodworking, drafting, needlework, and

⁴⁶See p. 31-32.

⁴⁷For a timetable on the establishment of the major art schools in Asia see: John Clark, Modern Asian Art, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), p.156.

⁴⁸Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, (London: The Free Press, 1997), p. 91.

⁴⁹Edward W. Said, Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient, (1978; London: Penguin, 1995).

⁵⁰Photo-Litho process was introduced by Master Ferozedin in 1910.

miniature painting.⁵¹ The programme offered indicates a certain Westernization through the introduction of European academic naturalism, as well as the preservation of indigenous craftsmanship in order to save the Indian decorative arts. Another reason for the emphasis on craftsmanship was to compensate for the loss of skills due to the collapse of the Indian handicraft industries which followed the import of British mass-produced goods.⁵² Indeed, the idea of maintaining the regional crafts of the Punjab was one of the major concerns during the establishment of the institution. The importance and the values given to crafts in the Punjab region were reflected in two exhibitions in Lahore: The exhibition of Punjab products, arts, and manufacturing, held in 1864, followed by an exhibition on industrial arts in 1872.⁵³ The principle aim of the Mayo School as claimed by the Director of Public Instruction was:

“...to be emphatically an industrial one. We do not wish to imitate the ceramic vases of Madras or the foliated capitals (of) Bombay, but to draw our experience rather from the royal workshops of the Mughals, from the best native specimens of Art and Industry in modern India, and from the cyclopean forges of the railway.”⁵⁴

Ceramic vases from Madras belonged to the Hindu/Buddhist culture of the subcontinent, as did the foliated capitals from Bombay. The Mughal workshops were part of a Muslim identity and the Muslim's cultural history, and the industries of modern India were a British establishment. Yet the exclusion of typical Hindu practices in the school curriculum cannot be interpreted as a declaration to reinforce a Muslim ideology, but must rather be seen as “a uniform syllabus, based on that of the School of Industrial Arts at South Kensington, London,”⁵⁵ which was applied to all the art schools on the subcontinent at the time. The emphasis on regional crafts was underlined in Principal Percy Brown's definition of his vision on what the school should be. In 1904 he declared:

“The object of the School is to give instruction in the Art of Design, with special reference to the artistic industries indigenous to the Punjab, and to the Architectural and Decorative styles

⁵¹See Bashir Ahmed, “Reviving Islam Traditions”, *Revival of Traditional Miniature Paintings: National College of Arts Celebrates 125 Years of Excellence 1875 – 2000*, (Lahore: n.p., 2000), N. pag.

⁵²It also needs to be mentioned in this context that through the import of cheaper, machine-produced English goods, craftsmen in India were deprived of their livelihood. For instance broadcloth from England was shipped into India and left traditional cotton-weavers unviable. Many died of starvation. The whole process of restructuring native industries around British manufacturing was completed by the first half of the nineteenth century.

⁵³Due to its 125th anniversary, The National College of Arts published a folder with data on the history of the school. *National College of Arts Celebrating 125 Years of Excellence – 1875-2000*.

⁵⁴Ibid., see chapter on “The Mayo School of Art: a brief overview”, N. pag.

⁵⁵Partha Mitter, *Indian Art*, op.cit., p. 174.

of Art peculiar to the Province; and to exercise a general supervision over the Industrial and Technical Schools of the Punjab, and over instruction in Elementary Drawing in ordinary Schools.”⁵⁶

This idea soon blossomed. In 1915, twenty-eight industrial schools were inspected by the Mayo School of Arts and, only four years later in 1919, architectural classes were started. The next step was taken by Principal Sandmendra Nath Gupta, who introduced the Bengali watercolour wash technique (to which Chughtai was attracted), alongside allowing a small number of females to pursue evening classes.

3.5 1947 – 1958 New Artistic Definitions

In August 1947 Pakistan came into existence. Partition caused a flood of mass migration. More than half a million people died and more than ten million people crossed the borders as refugees. Driven out by ethnic cleansing, 4.6 million Muslims had to leave their houses in East Punjab. It was from this devastating background that Pakistan’s artists had to establish their new identity. Partition created a void in Pakistan’s cultural landscape. Where could they turn to? If not the East then the West. In terms of style, landscape artists played a large role in Pakistan’s art scene. This was soon followed by a shift towards non-figurative art, which was introduced through the semi-abstract works of Zubeida Agha (1922-1997) and Shakir Ali (1916-1975). In terms of social commentary, in these initial years nothing was produced in Pakistan that would refer to the great upheaval caused by Partition.

Karachi became the provisional capital of Pakistan and the Karachi Fine Arts Society held regular exhibitions. However the cultural centre remained at Lahore, where Anna Molka Ahmed (1917-95), an East European married to a Pakistani painter, founded the Alhambra Art Council in 1949. At the same time, she also initiated and headed the then-recently opened fine-arts department at the Punjab University.⁵⁷ The Art Council held exhibitions and offered space to the newly-formed Lahore Art Circle to discuss abstract art and other subjects of common interest. Armed with a desire to break traditional rules, the Art Circle, formed from the old guard by Anna Molka, Chughtai and Allah Bukhsh, started something like a secession.

⁵⁶ See: National College of Arts Celebrating 125 Years of Excellence – 1875-2000. op cit., n.P. Percy Brown was an eminent art historian who was principal at the Mayo School from 1897 until 1909. He later headed the famed Calcutta School of Art.

In this transitional atmosphere the figure of Shakir Ali (1916 – 1975) emerged to give these artists a strong direction.

Meanwhile in India, artists equipped with the modernising impulse and a Leftist orientation from the 1940s formed groups such as the Progressive Artists Group in Calcutta in 1942, the Progressive Painters Association in Madras in 1944, and the flamboyant but short-lived, Progressive Artists Group in Bombay in 1947. We have already seen how, during the early years of the freedom struggle, Indian artists started to rediscover their Indian identity. Paradoxically, this ideology continued to dominate artistic concerns after independence as global modernity was confronted. Even though it is said that at the time artists on either side of the new frontiers in the divided subcontinent were in total ignorance of each other, the emphasis on cultural identity obviously became a major concern for artists on both sides of the newly drawn borders. According to Mitter, “the tension generated by the conflicting demands of global modernity and national specificity became a major preoccupation of Third World artists.”⁵⁸ But the discrimination between art discourses (e.g. our art from their art) in Pakistan was fought on two fronts: One with India and the other with Western modernity.

In this climate, Shakir Ali made his return to Pakistan from Europe. He had spent time, like many of his counterparts from India, in post-war Paris and was influenced by the leftist milieu there. To briefly compare Pakistan’s situation with its neighbour, Iran, one observes that art under the influence of Western modernism developed along a similar trajectory. In Iran in the 1940s, artist-led societies and galleries were established and postgraduate students who came back from Europe and the USA introduced new perceptions of art, mainly Cubism and Abstract art. Some of these artists even spent time, like Shakir Ali, at André Lhote’s (1885 – 1962) studio in Paris.

3.6 André Lhote

Lhote was a French painter, sculptor, and writer on art. Primarily a self-taught painter, he worked initially as a commercial wood carver. His early work was Fauvist but he soon adopted the stylistic mannerisms of Cubism. Lhote was more important as a teacher and

⁵⁷Until 1956 only girls were admitted to art classes.

⁵⁸ Partha Mitter, *Indian Art*, op.cit., p. 206

modern art critic than as a practising artist. He exercised an extensive influence on younger artists, both French and foreign, through his own academy of art, the Académie Montparnasse, founded in 1922. Lhote's theories on modern art, concerned principally with maintaining a balance with tradition, were very closely heeded. His Traité du paysage (Treatise on the Landscape), published by Flury, is a model of its kind. The eternal rules of painting are recalled on every page, and many illustrations are used and presented as the brake and rudder for any pictorial creation. Lhote's ideas are important to an era, which has, since the turn of the century, seen wave after wave of avant-garde artists trying to redefine themselves.

In Traité, André Lhote speaks of the essence of art: Art must not limit nature but represent it "under the pretext of imitation, pure plastic elements: measures, directions, ornaments, lights, values, colours, matter, distributed and organized according to the demands of the laws of nature."⁵⁹ Drawing and painting, according to Lhote, are dependant on the arts of the senses, which find their laws in morphology. He points out that the Moderns turned to the "‘primitives’...for ‘primitive’ people who live side by side with the forms of nature, who follow its rhythms, who physically feel its repercussions, spontaneously find the combination of those forms that are the most vivid."⁶⁰ Although Lhote adhered to Cubism he refused pure conception and appealed for a certain intelligibility in painting. Lhote, who saw the "civilized" peoples as "prisoners of the inhuman machine,"⁶¹ attracted artists from the non-western (or "non-civilized") world and in turn enjoyed sharing his ideas with them. In 1956, Shakir Ali wrote an article in Humayun, Lahore, criticizing "the modern machine age which was killing art."⁶² While this articulation carries a clear leftist input, at the same time it resonates with what Lhote says in his Traité about respecting the laws of nature. Both articulations are relevant to Shakir Ali's development of a Modernism that he introduced and shared with his peers in Lahore.

⁵⁹ André Lhote, "Traité du paysage", Jean-Louis Ferrier, Director and Yann le Pichon, Walter D. Glanze (English Translation), Art of Our Century: The Chronicle of Western Art. 1900 to the Present, (New York: Prentice-Hall Editions, 1988), p. 383.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Shima Majid, "Humayun", Lahore, October 1956, p. 45, in Akbar Naqvi, op. cit., p. 209.

3.7 **Shakir Ali (1916-1975) and Modernism in Pakistan**

Shakir Ali went through a rather old-fashioned training in India during the colonial period. He studied at the Ukil Brothers Studio in New Delhi, who had in turn, learned their craft from Abanindranath Tagore in Calcutta. Even though New Delhi was exposed to other artistic influences, the Bengal School style was still readily visible.⁶³ In 1938, after one year in Delhi, Shakir Ali joined the J. J. School of Art in Bombay. It was there that he “received a firm grounding in the academic British system of art education, drawing from cast models and copying old masters.”⁶⁴ At that time, western influences such as Impressionism and Post-impressionism were being practised at J. J. School, but Shakir Ali was also exposed to miniature painting and the wall paintings of the Ajanta Caves. Perhaps this explains why he was reportedly trained as a mural painter in Bombay. Whether the claims are accurate or not, the variety of non-Eastern (modern European accomplishments) and traditional Eastern elements that he became acquainted with was quite vast.

In 1946, a year before Partition, Shakir Ali joined London’s Slade School of Art where he had a chance to study the original drawings of the old masters. For Indian artists with an English academic art background London became the destination of Europe. The legendary Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-41), the first professional female artist in India, was, in fact, the first to break with this tradition when she headed for Paris in the 1920s. Two decades later in 1949, Shakir Ali, like many of his Indian counterparts, also headed for Paris to study with André Lhote. So did Jalil Ziapour (b.1928), an Iranian artist who is regarded as one of the modernists in his country. He also attended Lhote’s school and upon returning to his country in 1949, set up the Fighting Rooster Society, which was one of many artist groups that blossomed in the 1940s and 1950s. Ziapour hence became known as a defender of Cubism.

Shakir Ali held his first exhibition in Lahore in 1957, six years after his return from Europe. That it was not a great success was not solely the fault of the city, but also because the audience had not been prepared for the new and unexpected. By then, the only artists

⁶³See Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India: 1850-1922*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 340. „The Bengal School consciously sought to merge individual differences: linear perspective was modified in favour of Mughal aerial perspective, or the far-eastern atmospheric one, but never abandoned; colours, bound by far-eastern conventions, were muted,On the whole, the movement gave up chiaroscuro in favour of a flat treatment, defined by strong outlines.“ In other words, the movement gave up the academic art indoctrinated by the British.

⁶⁴Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, *Contemporary Painting In Pakistan*, (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1992), p. 43.

Lahorites knew were Chughtai, Allah Bukhsh, and Anna Molka. The Lahore exhibition in March was followed by one at Frere Hall in Karachi, under the auspices of the Arts Council of Pakistan, from 31 May to 4 June of the same year. His success in Karachi was largely due to careful pre-emptive measures: a monograph written by Nasir Shamsie and with a two-page introduction by Altaf Gauhar, who was allegedly a “star bureaucrat.”

Figures with Cattle (Fig. 13) indicates an attempt to combine the following: the Cubism of Picasso, former artistic experiences such as cave painting in Altamira or Ajanta, and a strong desire to create a specific Pakistani expression dressed up in a modern style. The bull became a recurrent element from the 1950s. In Figures with Cattle, the ubiquitous bull of rural Pakistan is rendered in the manner of the mural painting that Ali practiced in Bombay. This move away from previously-executed still-lives in Cubist/Cezannesque style (Fig. 14) can be interpreted as a transformation to create something new by openly valorizing peasant/proletarian bodies. This procedure was similar to that of Indian artists like Akbar Padamsee (b. 1928), Syed Haider Raza (b. 1922), and Krishna Reddy (b. 1925), who “celebrated... the immanent 'truth' of art language, to become the first heralds of internationalism in India.”⁶⁵ However, Pakistan lacked established institutions and artists, so initially Modernism could only develop in an interrupted and hesitant manner.

When tracing Indian Modernism, Geeta Kapur comes to the conclusion that among the several artists' groups in the 1940s and 1950s who were claiming to be Modernists, the Bombay Progressives were the “most 'correctly' modernist,”⁶⁶ in that “they offered a formalist manifesto that was to help the first generation of artists in independent India to position themselves internationally.”⁶⁷ Their formalist credo runs as follows: “Elemental and eternal laws of aesthetic order, plastic co-ordination and colour composition.”⁶⁸ Some of this spirit very clearly recalls André Lhote's influence, under whose tutelage many of these artists studied; and though it can be interpreted that artists from the subcontinent had partaken of the same artistic ideas and movements until 1947,⁶⁹ this assistance to reach an “international position,” as Geeta Kapur calls it, was what Pakistan's first generation of artists were clearly missing. Challenging the earlier artistic concerns seems to have been the credo on both sides

⁶⁵Geeta Kapur, When was Modernism, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p. 305.

⁶⁶Geeta Kapur, When Was Modernism: Essay on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p. 304.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 304.

⁶⁸See: Partha Mitter, Indian Art, p. 206.

⁶⁹Some artists certainly had partaken of the same artistic experiences beyond 1947, in the Diaspora in London or Paris. Think of those that went to Lhote's school.

of the new borders. While the younger generation of Indian artists showed impatience with the Bengal School, in Pakistan, the quest for a non-figurative art was growing strongly. Even though Shakir Ali is considered the artist who gave the younger generation a direction, it must be emphasised that the “doyen of modernism in Pakistan”⁷⁰ was Zubeida Agha (1922-1997).

Anticipating Pakistan’s geography, and considering the artists who worked within this confined territory prior to 1947, Abdur Rehman Chughtai, Alla Bux, and Babesh Chandra Sanyal (b.1902) can be called pioneers of modern art in Pakistan. Even though Chughtai, for instance, who was inspired by Abanindranath Tagore’s nationalist and artistic rhetoric in Calcutta, was at times subscribed to a Muslim rhetoric, it should be noted that since Pakistan did not even exist then, it could hardly be spoken of as nationalist rhetoric. The regional expressions in the art of Chughtai and Bux can be interpreted as the search for another Muslim cultural identity within the undivided subcontinent—one that differs from that of their counterparts in Calcutta. The inherent wish to reconstruct cultural identity within a colonised but nationalising (and much agitated) country links these artists’ ideas to those of Mohammad Ali Jinnah; and expresses their common commitment to a Modernism rooted within a specific culture. Yet paradoxically it is also the regionalism in their art which reminds us of the strength of the Unionist Party that dominated politics in the Punjab throughout the last two decades of British rule on the subcontinent.⁷¹ Artists who began their careers after Partition initially tended to distance themselves from a culture-specific Modernism in favour of an international Modernism. They did this so much so, that cultural identity issues would soon be revived in the early 1960s.

If Partha Mitter defined Gaganendranath’s later works as “post-Cubist,”⁷² then the Cubist-influenced work of Shakir Ali could be called “neo-Cubist.” However, since the history of art is filled with mostly fortuitous labels, we should not be distracted by tags and rather look at the works of art themselves. Since what Shakir Ali came back with from Europe was not pure Cubism, but his own interpretation of it, we must understand how he fused it with what his own cultural background had offered; with what he had experienced and admired before departing; and even more, with what his experiences taught him after returning. Naqvi considers that Shakir Ali needed Cubism to distance himself from his land and culture, but

⁷⁰Salima Hashmi, Unveiling the Visible: Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan, (Islamabad: Actionaid Pakistan, 2002), p. 35.

⁷¹Ian Talbot, India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation, (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 128-129.

⁷²Partha Mitter, Indian Art, op.cit., p. 191.

that he also needed the diasporic experience for his eventual homecoming.⁷³ Being able to distance himself was surely one of the reasons that Shakir Ali aimed for Cubism. Another might have been the possibilities Cubism offered: its flatness and its two-dimensionality that Eastern and Islamic art favoured over the Renaissance invention of the perspective.

3.8 Zubeida Agha (1922-1997)

Zubeida Agha is regarded by many to be Pakistan's first modern painter. In a group exhibition in Karachi in 1948, only her work (of all the other Pakistani painters exhibited) was identified by a journalist from *The Statesman* as modern.⁷⁴ A year later she held her first solo exhibition in Karachi, an event which could easily mark the beginning of modern art exhibitions in Pakistan. Her work was received with both great appreciation as well as rejection, and this agitation can be seen as a landmark in the history of art in Pakistan. The audience's eye—theretofore accustomed only to the Old School paintings of Chughtai's "orientalist" style and Bux's European academic style—was confronted for the first time with the unexpected and unfamiliar.

Agha took her first lessons in painting at B C Sanyal's studio in Lahore in the 1940s, after graduating in political science. An Italian painter and prisoner of war in Lahore, Mario Perligieri, gave her lessons in abstract painting. Leaving Pakistan for London and subsequently for Paris in 1950 changed her style. Although Zubeida Agha seemed to have made such an entrance on Pakistan's art scene with her promising exhibitions in Karachi, she did not have followers of her abstract painting. It is said that she admired the art of Amrita Sher Gill (1913-1941), the famous Indian painter who settled in Lahore before her early death. Gill's art was conjured out of a personal expression—a synthesis of East and West—and she became famous for a life of freedom and moral disrepute. Zubeida Agha was born into a liberal household where she was allowed to pursue her talent. Yet perhaps she feared falling into the trap of leading an indecent bohemian life. As Naqvi puts it, "she was free as an artist but led a punishingly conventional life as a person."⁷⁵ Works like A Still Life with Horse Cart, 1954 (Fig. 15), and In the Forest, 1958 (Fig. 16), show a variety of influences.

⁷³ Akbar Naqvi, op.cit., p. 197

⁷⁴ Akbar Naqvi, Image and Identity, op.cit., p. 147. The exhibition also featured works by Jamini Roy.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

The background of the former painting recalls the Mannerism and surrealistic imagery developed by Marc Chagall, while the forefront, with the linearly decorated table setting reminds us of Matisse. The latter work is of vibrant colors, as opposed to the rather somber color scheme of the former work. The quiet composition of people, animals, vegetation, and scattered huts, are very reminiscent of a south-Asian setting. The confrontational use of pure colours can be connected to Rajput miniatures, while the stronger tonations can be traced back to fauvist mannerism.

Agha's contribution to Pakistan's artistic environment however must also be seen on another level. After having lived in both Lahore and Karachi, she settled in Rawalpindi where she set up Pakistan's first private art gallery in 1961. For sixteen years she gave young artists the possibility of exhibiting alongside more established artists from both East and West Pakistan. After moving to Islamabad, she gifted her private collection of paintings to the National Council of Arts in Islamabad.

3.9 Landscape versus Abstraction in Lahore

Meanwhile in 1951, Mark Sponenburgh, a sculptor who had been hired from the J.J. School of Art in Bombay, became the principal of the Mayo School of Art in Lahore.⁷⁶ Sponenburgh preached a Bauhaus philosophy and spread this version of Modernism throughout the country.⁷⁷ It was under Sponenburgh in 1958 that the Mayo School of Art reorganized and changed its name to the National College of Arts (NCA). Shakir Ali joined the NCA in 1952 and was to become its first Pakistani principal.

The Lahore Art Circle's early concerns with landscape and portraiture were transformed to abstraction by Shakir Ali. Among the members of the circle were Moyene Najmi (1928-), Sheikh Safdar (1924-1983), Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928-1985), Alis Imam (1924-2002) and Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979). Najmi and Safdar were the only ones who stayed in Lahore, while the others left for Karachi, London, and Germany. Moyene Najmi's paintings,

⁷⁶On the development and history of the National College of Art see: Simone Wille, "The Mayo School of Art", *Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New*, unpublished Master Thesis, University of Innsbruck, 2002, pp. 11-17.

⁷⁷See Akbar Naqvi, "Transfers of Power and Perception: Four Pakistani Artists", *Arts & the Islamic World*, Special Volume, 50 Years of Art in Pakistan, No. 32, p. 11.

therefore, were concerned with his immediate environment. An early and conventional landscape painting dates back to 1949. The massive trees in Landscape (Fig. 17), rendered in earth colours, lend his work a poetic overtone. In a later work, Mughal Garden (Fig. 18), we can see how he transformed a rather conventional landscape. The four cypress trees in the foreground of the painting are centralised and build an alley towards the top of the painting reminiscent of an architectural facade. Assuming that the artist had Shalimar Gardens in mind, this can be seen as a transformation of Mughal architectural symmetry into abstract painting. The four cypress trees stand like pillars against the enclosing white plane with speckles of colours. Two thirds of the lower left and right side are painted in heavy brown: The oil seems to have been worked up towards the top where bushy trees garland the walls of the architectural setting. Opposed to the rhythmically-varied upper part of the canvas, we understand the composition of the steady and silent larger part of the painting with the four trees. Najmi's "Farbfeldmalerei" is an expression of an individual practice identified by rendering local subjects with imported formal devices. By applying colour so thickly, his paintings seem reminiscent of reliefs. The earth colours that he used throughout his life are local colours and become a testimony to his affiliation with the region.

3.10 Post-World War II vis á vis the Postcolonial Situation

In summary, in the first decade of Pakistan's existence, a retrospective international outlook positioned the art of the new and post-colonial nation within a global whole. After the Second World War, the world was in crisis. In Europe, where occupation and war atrocities were the circumstances from which a new generation of painters emerged, the vision of what had been called—since Montaigne—"the human condition" darkened.

"The experience of war," Michel Foucault said, "demonstrated to us the necessity and the urgency of a society radically different from that in which we have lived: that society which had permitted Nazism, which lay down prostrate before it, and which passed, en bloc, to the

side of de Gaulle. In the face of all that, a large portion of French youth had a reaction of total disgust.”⁷⁸

In terms that were familiar to painters everywhere in the post-war period, Foucault went on to say that these youths wanted to be “completely other, in a world completely other.”⁷⁹ This response was not limited to French youth. In Japan, where the war had culminated in a paroxysm of devastation of unimaginable proportions, young artists emerged with an almost unanimous revulsion toward the past. According to the art historian Shin’ichi Segi, “everyone, young and old, went to an extreme in art and politics in order to forget or detest the past.”⁸⁰ The Latin American continent was not directly engaged in the Second World War yet local upheavals and violations as well as the impact of fascist systems were widespread during this time.

As a response to such overwhelming public events, the issue of the nation itself was brought into question. The existence of nationalism was perceived as contrary to modernist sympathies, yet the problem of national identity continued to be unresolved. In regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and even North America, many artists worked with the tension between the need to differentiate themselves and the need to belong to the internationalist fraternity of Modernism. Although perpetually uneasy, those artists flocked to Paris and London. In Paris, the poet Octavio Paz forged an original view of Modernism. Having admired André Breton, who for years had preached the allure of other civilizations, Paz urged his young cohorts to understand that “to be really modern, it was necessary to regress to the beginning of the beginning” and to be “contemporaries of all men.”

In order to frame contemporary art in Pakistan (or Asia in general), the whole century of engagement with Western Modernism has to be acknowledged. David Clarke calls for “a dethroning of Western-centred narratives of artistic modernity altogether” and for “an awareness of the variety of ways of responding to the modern condition that artists in different cultural situations have made.”⁸¹ Despite this multi-directional development, it is interesting to look at the similarities in terms of global avant-garde development. David

⁷⁸Michel Foucault, “Conversazione con Michel Foucault”, *Foucault, Dits et écrits*, Vol. 4, (Paris: n.P., 1994), p. 49.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Shin’ichi Segi, in Dore Ashton, *The Delicate Thread; Teshigahara’s Life in Art*, (New York: n.P., 1997), p. 52.

⁸¹David Clarke, “Contemporary Asian Art and its Western Reception”, *Third Text*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2002 (London: Routledge), p. 241.

Craven suggests a “stringent look at the emergence of avant-garde in the West—and elsewhere, for example, in Latin America with Modernismo during the late 19th century or in India with Calcutta Modernist painting during the 1920s.”⁸² It is there that he sees “a new link...between avant-garde art and counter-hegemonic cultural practices of a type that simply did not exist before the rise of Industrial capitalism in the late 18th century.”⁸³

The art produced by the “pioneers” (the influential, post-Independence generation of artists in Pakistan) was, in fact, never properly Modernist in the Greenbergian definition, not even according to Octavio Paz’s definition as stated above. (This latter definition, though, can be and is applied to art discussed in the work of Sadequain in the following section). However, as we noted earlier, Modernism in Indian art can be traced back to the Bengal school where, according to Geeta Kapur, it was started hesitantly by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Abanindranath Tagore.⁸⁴ A more serious shift towards Modernism came with Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and his artistic expression through primitive art. Apart from the fact that primitivism reclaimed global status with the spread of Western Modernism, its reappearance in Indian art in the late 1920s can also be traced back to Mahatma Gandhi’s Satyagraha movement. Summing up artistic development in the first decades of the Indian subcontinent, Mitter claims that “in the first phase, artistic nationalism had identified the nation with the past; from the 1920s, it began equating the nation with the soil.”⁸⁵

From that point on, the next turn in the narrative was taken by **Jamini Roy** (1887-1974) in Calcutta. After a long period searching and flirting with different styles from both the East and West, he discovered the scroll painting of West Bengal. His artistic achievement thus lay in simplification. Through strong colour and bold lines, coming to terms with a search for authentic Modernism, Roy finally found it in the soil of West Bengal. The legendary Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-41), the first professional woman artist in India, was yet another major figure in Indian Modernism. As previously noted, Paris-trained Sher-Gil returned to India in 1934 and developed her own primitivist, oriental, and modern style; which differed from Roy in as much as her images, mostly of women, were more idealized, mostly in Gauguinesque style,

⁸²David Craven, “Art History and the Challenge of Postcolonial Modernism”, Third Text, Vol. 15, Issue 3, 2002, (London: Routledge), p. 311.

⁸³Ibid., p. 311.

⁸⁴Geeta Kapur, When Was Modernism, op. cit., p. 302.

⁸⁵Partha Mitter, Indian Art, op. cit., p. 192.

where influences from the “Neue Sachlichkeit” movement can be detected as well. A radical shift was taken by the leading sculptor at Santiniketan, Ramkindar Baij, who idealized the Santhals with unconventional materials. Instead of the common use of bronze, he introduced cement and concrete to address indigenous subject-matter.

Towards the end of the colonial period, artists came to reject artistic nationalism as practiced at the Bengal school. Though the character of nationalism has its roots in fear and hatred of the other, the discourse of nationalism originated from the local context of colonialism while the colonial condition itself was coming to an end. Art could serve as a tool to control cultural values, but “the reason why national identity has been so contested all over Asia in the presentation of the 'national' in art was because this hegemony was above all a political one, whether in the founding of the state against Euramerica or in wresting the state from local contestants for its control.”⁸⁶

So where is Pakistan’s Modernism to be found? Referring to prior research on the development of Indian Modernism, it can be suggested that Abdur Rahman Chughtai was the first modern painter of Pakistan. If one closely follows the initiatives coming out of the Bengal school, we can see that by the 1920s his work changed towards a Muslim and Islamic aesthetic with the idea of creating a Punjabi regionalism in art that was based in Lahore. However, another Pakistani (or East Pakistani and later Bangladeshi) painter that needs to be mentioned here is **Zainul Abedin** (1914-1976). Trained in Calcutta in the early 1930s, and part of the Progressive Artists Group in the 1940s, he was obviously acquainted with the current Orientalist style. In a remarkable series of sketches dedicated to the man-made famine in Bengal (Fig. 19) that killed hundreds of thousands of people, the artist stripped off all the unnecessary decorative elements of his earlier work, thereby expressing this social disaster with the remaining bold and expressive lines. The series of famine sketches, executed in Chinese ink and brush on cheap packing paper, brought Zainul Abedin not only fame, but also a new direction in painting which placed human suffering, struggle, and protest in the foreground. While critics of his time referenced Goya's⁸⁷ ability to fuse the Orient and the Occident,⁸⁸ Abedin’s strong lines found more resonance with local patua-scrolls.⁸⁹ Although

⁸⁶John Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 1998), p. 240.

⁸⁷See: Jalal Uddin Ahmed, *Contemporary Painters of Pakistan*, op.cit., p. 28.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁹Picture scroll painters exist in many places in Asia. While in East Asia they are more of a classical art with highly defined theoretical content and aesthetic form, it also survives in South Asia, and in India in particular, as

his style changed and became more realistic over the subsequent years, Zainul Abedin remained faithful in the use of his subjects—the struggling men and women—whom he depicted in combinations of social inquiry and protest.⁹⁰

After Partition, Zainul Abedin moved from Calcutta to Dhaka (then East Pakistan), where he was appointed head of the newly founded art school in 1948. This institute became the centre of a Modernist movement strongly concerned with political and social upheavals: Artists in East Pakistan were strongly involved in the political struggle of Bengalis, which peaked with Independence and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

3.11 1958 - 1971

Military Rule and Modernisation versus Rediscovered Traditions

Social Commentary and Calligraphic Modernism

The late 1950s and 1960s mark the second phase of Pakistan's Modernism, stimulated by artists and writers returning to their home country after periods of time spent in Europe. It was not so much the direct, transplanted influence of the European avant-garde that awoke the desire for modernization in Pakistan's visual arts, but rather the questions raised by Pakistanis themselves as to how to make their international experience relevant to a new and developing society.

During Ayub Khan's Presidential period (1958-1969), a small elite profited through the rapid economic growth that resulted from Khan's commitment to economic development. However, the majority of the population suffered from inflation. Under the influence of the United States, Japan, and West Germany, developmental emphasis was put on the private sector only—in contrast to India's approach. This resulted in the increase of impoverished people. The war with India in 1965 and the subsequent decline of foreign investment added to the

a folk art and an element of an audiovisual representation. Artists travel from village to village, and from house to house to sing or recite; and with the accompanied painting, scroll the story. (Annotation by the author).

⁹⁰The reason why a comparison with Goya appeared acceptable.

misery. For all of his regime's endeavours and achievements, social tensions and regional conflicts began to grow.⁹¹

As noted earlier, Khan used cinema to promote his ideas, but he primarily used the press as a weapon in his propaganda campaign. How did art respond to this new "modernizing" impulse? While regional rights were increasingly suppressed under Ayub Khan's rule, art patronage was undertaken by the government through the funding of official arts bodies and travelling exhibitions within East and West Pakistan. State patronage was made available to artists, writers, and intellectuals; and a National Cultural Policy set up a Fine Arts department at the University of Peshawar in 1964, followed by the Sindh University in 1969.

Generally, after the initial post-Partition years, where artists were guided by socialist idealism and had looked to the West for inspiration, a number of leading artists came to the conclusion that cultural identity was not to be found in the West, but at home. In the 1960s as much as in the 1950s, artists who had travelled to Europe and returned to Pakistan were faced with the perpetual problem of how to identify their work with their own culture and how to create a genuine visual form by manipulating their Western training. However, since Cubism and Abstract Expressionism were spread over the country in the 1950s, one might have thought that, after such consolidation of local and international styles, a change of direction would have taken place in the following decade. Instead, art critics lamented that leading artists like Shakir Ali and Zubeida Agha were still tied to European points of references. In their defence, it must be acknowledged that, just as there were regional distinctions and different inflections in the lingua franca, there were also significant delays and retrievals, since ideas were diffused around the world in general. Interestingly though, abstract art in Pakistan was only successful to a certain extent. One reason for this, (to reference what Nilofur Farrukh says about prevailing aesthetic values of the region and connections between literature, music and painting), is because "poets and writers rejected and ridiculed abstract art."⁹² Western Modernism was not fully adapted since the need to achieve representation of a new sense of modernity became a clear preoccupation of the art of these years. This period of self-discovery, which itself followed a period of alienation from earlier indigenous art, during which artists were geared towards European and American trends and techniques, is

⁹¹On details about Ayub Khan's modernisation process see: Ian Talbot, op. cit., pp. 205 – 222.

⁹²Nilofur Farrukh, „Echoes of Socio-Political History“, *Arts & the Islamic World*, Special Volume, 50 Years of Art in Pakistan, No. 32, p. 60.

demonstrated throughout the post-colonial and Third World. The central question in Pakistan resembled those of other post-colonial societies: How does one articulate the local and the cosmopolitan? None of the societies in question mimetically adopted foreign models. More relevant perhaps for the post-colonial world is what Néstor García Canclini said about Latin America: There is no “point in a reactive search for an alternative, absolutely independent paradigm when the traditions have already been transformed by the expansion of international capitalism.”⁹³

Sadequain Naqvi (1930-87) became one of the most prominent artists in Pakistan at that time. Although his career had already taken off in 1956, his art very strongly reflected the state of Pakistan during the dictatorship of Ayub Khan where, between 1966 and 1970, the country experienced social and political unrest. This time of modernisation awakened a small number of artists and forced them to respond to economic upheavals and social injustice. It was a time where anarchic sources were reflected in art throughout the Third World. Referring to the second phase of Indian modernism, Geeta Kapur notes, “In India as elsewhere in Third World cultures a liberationist aesthetic led back to the notion of origins—not in wanting to tap the roots of a traditional past this time, nor to posit a national identity, but to reach mystically in a sense some absolute ahistorical state of being.”⁹⁴ This recalls Octavio Paz, the then-Mexican ambassador to India, who forged an original and universal view on modernism.⁹⁵ The short lived, Group 1890, in Bombay, drawing upon anarchic sources in modern European art, fitted in well with these ideas: Their 1963 exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with an introduction written by Octavio Paz.

⁹³Néstor García Canclini, “Modernity after Postmodernity”, Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America, (London: inIVA, 1995), pp. 36-37.

⁹⁴Geeta Kapur, „A Stake in Modernity: A Brief History of Contemporary Indian Art“, Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific, Caroline Turner (ed.), (Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), pp. 37-38.

⁹⁵See above.

3.12 Calligraphic Modernism

In neighbouring Iran, similar aesthetics seemed to influence artists. In the 1960s, an energetic group of artists rediscovered the rich iconography of votive art, or religious folk art, which could be found in shrines (Fig.20). These neo-traditional artists were trying to bridge tradition and Modernism. They were generally called the Saqqakhaneh artists, a saqqakhaneh being a votive fountain. According to Rose Issa,

“It is usually erected by private individuals as a charitable gift given in memory of the Shiite martyrs who were massacred by their Omayyad opponents while unable to reach the Euphrates—and therefore quench their thirst—in the desert near Karbala in AD 680.”⁹⁶

One of the most prominent artists emerging out of the Saqqakhaneh school was Hosseyn Zenderoudi (b. 1937) (Fig. 21). Inspired by Shiite folk art and calligraphy, Zenderoudi developed a unique combination of calligraphic elements with “Abjad figures (numerological formulae and letters) which replace the alphabet to convey secret messages.”⁹⁷ (Fig. 22) Issa continues and compares “his rhythmical compositions of repeated interwoven words and numbers with doa-nevisi (written prayers), which are set formulas for every problem.”⁹⁸ Zenderoudi’s national and international recognition derived from his striking and colourful large-scale paintings where the rhythm and semantics of calligraphy would soon attract followers in that field. Another artist who belonged to this school was Mansour Qandriz (1935-1965). Artists soon started to experiment with the various styles of calligraphy, exploring its lines and expressions, often stripping it bare and reducing it to its pure abstract aspect. Calligraphy was also used to re-script old poetry, or poetry itself was used to create new calligraphic compositions. Later, in the 1970s, calligraphy became more abstract with dynamic compositions made up of lines and colours.

It is quite easy to comprehend calligraphy as art. It is calligraphy's nature to be guided by rules and patterns, as well as the relationship between reappearing forms, which at times are

⁹⁶Rose Issa, „Borrowed Ware“, Iranian Contemporary Art, Exhibition catalogue, (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2001), p.18.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 18.

⁹⁸Ibid. P.18.

free but also rigorous to a geometric extent. Its properties are not unlike those of natural elements such as trees, flowers, or humans, whose representations offer almost unending possibilities. A great number of artists from Europe and America developed a fascination for calligraphy in the 20th century. These artists used calligraphy as a compositional element, often without any knowledge of the specific sign's meanings. In the middle of the 20th century, artists from Muslim countries stretching from Mauretania to Indonesia discovered the ubiquity of the script within their own traditions and started in very different manners to play with it. Some stuck with tradition and created new and mostly religious texts in Arabic or Turkish. Other artists hid legible texts or fragments within abstract compositions within the human body or other motifs. At times, artists randomly placed letters all over the picture plane. Sometimes they served as words, but mostly they were without meaning. Letters and words were even created as sculpture itself. This showed that the sheer possibilities of the script were endless.

The exploration of the abstract and expressive possibilities of the script occurred not only in the Islamic world, but also in Korea, China, and Japan, where calligraphy as an art also existed. In Japan, the Gutai group (founded in 1954) with its central figure, Jiro Yoshihara (1905-1972), made such an approach (Fig. 23). Yoshihara's paintings consisted of an ornate melange of Eastern and Western stylistic elements. Zen and Zen-versions of traditional oriental calligraphy were combined with aspects of American expressionism. At some stage, Gutai anticipated the European and American developments of the 70s in the same way Arte Povera did in Italy.

In Pakistan, **Anwar Jalal Shemza** (1928-1985) started off, like most of his contemporaries, with a cubist-influenced, geometric abstraction. According to Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, Anwar Jalal Shemza belongs to the first group of Pakistani painters using calligraphy in a non-traditional way.⁹⁹ He started to exploit calligraphy in London, where he emigrated in the late 1950s. While still in Pakistan, Shemza began to experiment with a combination of Roman letters and calligraphic forms: Bs and Ds (Fig. 24), from 1959, is one such example. The repetition of the letter "B", and its exposure in various directions, turns it at times into the letter "D". Shemza worked only on a small scale and rejected the hegemony of oil. He worked with water-based media on paper and fabrics. Compositional aspects as well as his use of colour are sometimes reminiscent of miniature painting. The repetition of the letters is kept

⁹⁹Op cit: Sirhandi. (See Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, Contemporary Painting in Pakistan, (Pakistan: Ferozsons, 1992).

frame within frame. The border between these two frames is worked like those of manuscripts or miniatures before mounting the decorative part. Meanwhile another screen or frame is created by the backbones of the letters. The choice of letters was most probably an aesthetic one. The straight lines and curves of these letters permitted him to create “his own arabesque.”¹⁰⁰ Naqvi points out Klee as an inspiration for Shemza. Indeed, Paul Klee was an artist who refused to draw hard distinctions between art and writing. Many of his paintings are a form of writing: they pullulate with signs, arrows, floating letters, misplaced directions, commas, and clefts. Klee wanted to render nature permeable, in the most exact way, to the language of style. There was a clear link between some of Klee’s plant motifs and the images of plankton, diatoms, seeds, and micro-organisms that German scientific photographers were making at the time. Shemza might have drawn inspiration from Klee’s milieu, but he was also very much inspired by the decorative art of his homeland and the variety of patterns and designs offered in the Islamic world in general. Shemza rediscovered his rich heritage via Klee, which is where these two artists intersect: During his famous journey to North Africa in 1914, Paul Klee discovered colour and the linear art of calligraphy. Klee had a fascination with the Arabic script and Egyptian hieroglyphs. This deep affinity demonstrates clearly that, despite emerging out of completely different starting points, works deriving from cross-cultural influences can produce similar aesthetics. “The complex triple relationship between the arabesque, calligraphy, and hieroglyphic belongs to the paradigmatic ideas and forms of abstract art. The one that moved with the greatest inventiveness in this triangle was Paul Klee.”¹⁰¹

In a later painting (Fig. 25), Shemza creates the effect of stained glass by again using the letters B and D (compare Fig. 24). This time the lines of the letters meander like cords along a grid which was, in the earlier painting, made up of the letters itself. The washes of red on fabric against the black lines in the forefront blaze up like fire. A year before his death in 1984 he painted Roots Series (Fig. 26). The flower reveals the letters B and D, whereas the roots show more of an affinity with a rather stylised arabesque or calligraphy.¹⁰² The

¹⁰⁰ Akbar Naqvi, *Image and Identity*, op.cit., p. 282.

¹⁰¹ Freely translated from German; from Markus Bröderlin, „Die Einheit in der Differenz. Die Bedeutung des Ornaments für die abstrakte Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts. Von Philipp Otto Runge bis Frank Stella, diss., Univ. Wuppertal, 1995 (Mikrofiche-Ausg.), in *Ornament und Abstraktion*, exhibition catalogue, op. cit., p. 100.

¹⁰² The Islamic Ornament has three categories. All of them can be traced back to the linear art of the arabesque, with its three types of rhythmically interlaced variants – vegetal, geometric, and calligraphic – which, following the script, switches over to either the floral or to the purely geometrical, as in the typical colours white,

juxtaposition of the Roman letters and the calligraphy (Western and Eastern elements) in an abstract form not only achieved aesthetic results, but also expressed the artist's feeling while working within the diaspora. He could not have conveyed this feeling with more sensitivity and clarity than in the Roots Series. While Henry Van De Velde's goal in his famous decorative Plant Composition (Pflanzenkomposition), from circa 1893 (Fig.27), was to create a balance between form and interstice, Shemza's Roots Series creates—though in a more fragile way—a similar balance between line and plane.

Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979) can be called the *enfant terrible* in Pakistan's history of art. He is also regarded as one of four touchstones¹⁰³ of Pakistani art. His wide range of media and style reflected his restless soul as well as his state of mind, which was in perpetual turmoil. His early still-lives were greatly influenced by Shakir Ali and cubism. Between 1955 and 1964, Parvez developed his style of exuberant colours that filled basic compositions, often a still-life with flowers and vases. The same colours were also applied to his calligraphic exploitations, which developed around the same time as Ismail Gulgee's (1926-2007). In Untitled (Crucifixion III) (Fig. 28), Parvez turned his own body inside-out and stuck it up in the form of a cross. The orange-like head is highlighted by bright circles of yellow, and the sun that highlights the crucified body is made up of colourful forms and objects. In a *tachiste*, surrealist, and calligraphic vein, the small painting renders the double impression of the exposed body about to explode while the forms and splashes are "seemingly held together by (a) magnetic force"¹⁰⁴ that circles the head. A year later, similar motifs were applied to Bouquet (Fig. 29), where a strong, white line departing from a rectangle in the upper part of the painting ends in calligraphic forms at the lower part of the canvas. This line, functioning as the backbone of the work, is garlanded with forms and shapes reminiscent of those seen in Fig. 23. The orange square containing dots, placed in the centre of the painting, recalls a stage. Towards the upper left- and right-hand side of the canvas, groups of dots form a parting curtain, emphasizing the stage character of the composition. Artificial light reflects on both the curtain and the central image, the bouquet growing out from the central stage. The gestural calligraphic strokes in this painting resemble Ismail Gulgee's calligraphic works of the same period, yet his style reflected local carpet patterns as well as designs from Sindhi embroidery. Critics, as well as the artist himself, have pointed out similarities between Parvez

turquoise, and cobalt blue tile from Punjab, Pakistan. (Fig. 21) What is written in the Naskhi-Duktus, the expert will be able to read: "In the name of God the Merciful".

¹⁰³ Along with Zubeida Agha, Shakir Ali, and Sadequain.

¹⁰⁴ Sirhandi, op. cit., p. 74.

and the Scottish artist, Alan Davie (b. 1920), whose work includes elements inspired by ancient, ethnic, and religious cultures. Ahmed Parvez created a vast body of work that was exhibited nationally and internationally. He died tragically but was honoured with an official burial in Karachi.

According to Wijdan Ali, the first artist to have explored the relationship between abstraction in Western art and Arabic calligraphy was the Iraqi artist Madiha Omar (b. 1908-2005) in the early 1940s. Encouraged by the renowned art historian, Richard Ettinghausen, she exhibited twenty-two of her modern Islamic calligraphic art works as early as 1949 in an exhibition at the Georgetown Public Library in Washington, D.C.¹⁰⁵ Other artists who in various ways have explored the graphic qualities of Islamic calligraphy are the Lebanese artist, Said Akl (b. 1926) who, like Shemza¹⁰⁶ in Pakistan, combined both letters from the Latin and Arabic alphabet. Both artists' work recall the European art that leaned towards "Schrift-Bilder"—as developed by Paul Klee while surveying the Arab script—as well as the whole of the scriptural graphic. Another Lebanese artist whose art incorporated calligraphy in the early 50s was Wajih Nahle (b. 1932). Having been trained in academic realism, Nahle's calligraphic compositions were figures of human and animal forms. The Warrior (Fig.30) is one such early example. Here, the artist filled the torso of a helmeted warrior with calligraphic inscriptions, Qur'anic verses next to alphabetical characters, elements serving as hieroglyphic forms, and, above all, an artistically-fashioned arabesque. Besides the variety of epigraphy in this work, there is a far-reaching amount of symbolism, the most apparent being the hand, which appears in various forms of the arabesque. One could almost speak of a calligraphic composite figure reminiscent of the famous composite animals in India.¹⁰⁷ In Khartoum, both artists and calligraphers started exploring the graphic possibilities offered by traditional calligraphy. While Osman Waqialla (1925-2007) incorporated newspaper cut-outs with his collages composed of letters, Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930) came to calligraphy from a detour via Coptic manuscripts. These various forms of calligraphy that were explored in the early 1950s became a way to respond to the abstract by using one's own cultural heritage. Even though cultural identification was about saying who we were and what values governed us, it

¹⁰⁵Wijdan Ali, *Modern Islamic Art. Development and Continuity*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), p.152.

¹⁰⁶See above pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁷See below, p. 114.

was also about difference¹⁰⁸; and calligraphy, as developed in the Islamic and the Arab world, would soon express nationalist sentiments and develop its own nationalist course.¹⁰⁹ If, according to Clark, “for most Asian cultural discourses the modern began with the relativization of the past provided by the historical break of colonial or neo-colonial rule,”¹¹⁰ then it can be said that exploring calligraphy was initially a purely modernizing attempt, long before the political manipulation of calligraphy took place. Western art in the 1950s thrived for its abstraction, but an even greater attraction was the informal—the invitation to avoid form. A renunciation of the rigid geometrical framework echoed the constructivists' in-between wars and compositions. Calligraphy, because it is non-figurative, was and still is abstract in itself.

Zahoor ul Akhlaq's (1941-1999) Calligraphy of 1974 (Fig. 31) pays tribute to old manuscripts and farmans. The farman, or the king's seal—a large circle filled with calligraphy—is placed on the upper right-hand side within the inner frame of the traditional rectangular format. Abstracted calligraphy is located in the border area. The scribbling effect can be traced back both to the intention of rendering writing/calligraphy illegible and the inevitability of using the technique of etching in such a way.

Concerning the traditional manuscripts, it might be useful to rethink the meaning of the art of Arabic calligraphy:

- The border can pick up a parallel text next to the main text in the sense of a repetition
- It can contain marginal notes, extensions of the text
- The legibility can shift for the benefit of the border, since the border text is easy and the main text difficult to read
- Finally, the border can call into question the central positioning of the text by encircling it with script¹¹¹

Annemarie Schimmel's explanation about the development of various calligraphic styles can be useful here. She explains that shikasta developed out of tal'ik, the hanging style that was

¹⁰⁸See Jeffrey Weeks, “The Value of Difference,” Identity, Community, Culture, Difference, Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), p. 88, and Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?”, op.cit., p. 3.

¹⁰⁹See above: p. 19.

¹¹⁰John Clark, “Asian Modernism”, Contemporary Indian Art: Other Realities, Yshodhara Dalmia (ed.), (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2002), p.

¹¹¹Freely translated from Abdelkébir Khatibi, Mohammed Sijelmassi, Die Kunst der islamischen Kalligrafie, (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977), p. 214.

developed in the Persianate world. There are two sorts of shikasta: one appears with characters close together and connected with each other; the other shows certain letters far apart from each other.¹¹² Pages written in shikasta, the “broken script”, appear as if lines are thrown in without apparent order. They are often reminiscent of modern graphics rather than legible script.¹¹³ Ghubar, the “dust script”, which was derived from naskh, was written with a “minute pen”¹¹⁴ and served for “decorative purposes such as filling single letters with a whole text of making up figures of human beings, animals, or flowers from pious formulas.”¹¹⁵

A large number of calligraphic works were produced during Akhlaq’s time in London. In fact, it appears as though he became more involved with this genre away from home, at a time when he must have been exposed to a vast number of Western developments in art and culture. That he had in mind works from Pakistani artists is understandable, but working in *diaspora* must have also instigated within him a sense of dissent—the Western art world had already seized Eastern scripts. What was alien to the artist from the West (most of them could not read the foreign writing) became transformed, and the result was an obscurity with a peculiar allurements. The purpose of the acceptance of foreign script, therefore, was not the legibility in the ordinary sense, such as it was in a text. Dörte Zbikowski investigated this in the twentieth century: acceptable scripts were only legible on an associative level.¹¹⁶ As if responding to Zbikowski, Akhlaq said in an interview, “And I was doing calligraphic strokes which was a visual sensation—I did not want it to be read, I wanted the rhythm to come through. It was like the iconic image of a mother and child that has a universal impact; it was not a woman, a particular child but mother and child; it was not the content that interested me but the form.”¹¹⁷

¹¹²Ibid., p. 167.

¹¹³Annemarie Schimmel, Calligraphy and Islamic Culture, op. cit., p. 31.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p.24.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p.24.

¹¹⁶Dörte Zbikowski, Geheimnisvolle Zeichen. Fremde Schriften in der Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts: Paul Gauguin, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Willi Baumeister, Julius Bissier, Joaquin Torres-Garcia, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Tobey, (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1996), p. 9.

¹¹⁷Zahoor ul Akhlaq, op cit. Minissale, p. 151.

3.13 National Art for the Masses

Nationalism attempts to exercise compulsion over its members (the nation itself) and through images legitimisation is sought. Most of Pakistan's population, except the educated urban classes, were uneducated peasants. This necessitated an accessible and recognisable artistic expression of national themes. Comprising multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and rural and urban communities, political leaders of Pakistan since 1947 had striven to present the country as an example of a homogenous pan-Islamic culture. This representation, according to Clark, could only be fulfilled with the visual language a modern artist had developed and could not come from a peasant, traditional, or even neo-traditional one "because the [modern] artist was aware of the relativity of style and of his or her own consciousness of this on its articulation. National expression thus involved the artist abandoning the modern position that relativised style precisely when his or her relation to style forced the view that this was relative."¹¹⁸ However, one should not underestimate the role that popular visual art, as expressed in truck art in Pakistan, influenced the masses. After all, calligraphy, even when publicly commissioned in the form of large murals in public libraries, for instance, did not reach the masses as trucks did, which drove millions of kilometres around the country. Painted and decorated vehicles in Pakistan bear large symbolic and religious images from the Islamic world, as well as impressive motifs of national monuments and depictions of national heroes. Technological developments such as the atomic bomb are depicted in a heroic manner, juxtaposed with trivial subjects turning these vehicles into an interesting documentation of a culture sustaining both change and progress.

3.14 Peculiarities of Calligraphy

"Writing is the geometry of the spirit...purity of writing is purity of soul."¹¹⁹ Written by Qadi Ahmad, a sixteenth-century Iranian artist and critic, this quote is suggestive of calligraphy's extraordinary qualities and the remarkable importance that it held within the Muslim world. Writing is an instrument of God's will and therefore stands above all other artistic

¹¹⁸John Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, op. cit., p. 241.

¹¹⁹Qadi Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, Son of Mir-Munshi (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606), Translated from the Persian by V. Minorsky, vol. three, number two, (Washington: Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, 1959), pp. 21,22.

expressions. Writing was developed to either convey a specific message or simply enhance an object's beauty, but very often these two functions were inseparable. Calligraphy, perhaps more than any other artistic expression, can be interpreted on so many levels. Its decorative possibilities go beyond its classical program and

“are not limited to calligraphy's use as part of an object's overall aesthetic program. The script itself can 'absorb' a variety of motifs, thus further blurring the distinction between it and its decoration.”¹²⁰

Even in the earliest examples of Islamic calligraphy, a tendency to fuse decorative forms with calligraphic ones is apparent, thereby signifying that the viewer was not actually expected to read the text. Richard Ettinghausen, for example, noted that many inscriptions in the Muslim world are often so full of orthographic peculiarities or mistakes that eventually they render the text unreliable or, at least, extremely difficult to read.¹²¹ However, it is not primarily about being able to read the Qur'anic phrases and messages that appear on the walls of many mosques and tombs. It is more about the symbolic message that a Muslim would understand by his knowledge of the Qur'anic allusions in the inscriptions. “And it should be kept in mind that the central concept of Islam—the word Allāh—offered infinite possibilities to artists, who would fill the space between its two l's with knots, flowers, stars, and other designs.”¹²²

What lends calligraphy its distinct quality, but also makes it so difficult to understand, is its vast range of possibilities used on certain types of objects or two dimensional surfaces, as well as its capacity to carry both exoteric and esoteric messages with an enormous range of languages involved (Arabic, Persian, and Turkish). Even in the earliest preserved Islamic buildings, the Arabic inscription (in the cursive form of kufi) is composed with a minimum of diacritical points to differentiate the letters. Another factor making these inscriptions often very difficult to read was their placement at a very high level of the building or, if highly complex Arabic was used, on buildings in those countries where Arabic was not usually spoken. Ettinghausen concludes that the pious inscription was more or less devoted to God and became symbolic to the people.¹²³

¹²⁰Shen Fu, Glenn D. Lowry, and Ann Yonemura, From Concept to Context: Approaches to Asian and Islamic Calligraphy, (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1986), p. 106.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 107, in Richard Ettinghausen, 1974, pp. 304-5.

¹²²Annemarie Schimmel, Calligraphy and Islamic Culture, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1990), p. 9.

¹²³Richard Ettinghausen, „Des Menschen Werk“, in Welt des Islam, ed. Bernard Lewis, German edition (Munich: Orbis, 1976), p. 61.

The term “abstract” is used to define a certain type of painting. It is a criterion for art that the observer and the creator both use to differentiate a painting from its objective representations. In the case of writing, Oleg Grabar adds that since the Arabic alphabet underwent transformation towards abstract forms—angular in the kufic script, curved in later Persian scripts—it often suffered illegibility.¹²⁴ What is the point of illegible writing? To write something that cannot be read is an act which challenges the reader, and could lead to one of the greatest riddles of artistic creativity, the one that René Magritte’s “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” imposes.¹²⁵

Pakistan was created as the homeland for South Asian Muslims. The ties with Islam nurtured an ideological interest in the development of calligraphy as the most favoured art form and dominant artistic style patronised during General Zia ul Haq’s dictatorship (1977-88). As artist and art critic, Quddus Mirza, observed: “The craze for calligraphy increased when the Islamic revivalism erupted as a main force/desire in this region.”¹²⁶ A significant aspect of this time was the refusal of women painters to change their themes or genres. Both female artists and younger painters avoided calligraphy in their work.¹²⁷

3.15 Calligraphic Exploitation

Hanif Ramay (born 1930) was another Lahore artist who experimented with calligraphy as an art form at about the same time as Anwar Jalal Shemza. “While Shemza was using calligraphy to create unreadable compositions, Hanif Ramay abstracted words but consciously retained the integrity of the message.”¹²⁸ Another important artist who contributed to the modern movement in Pakistan was **Syed Sadequain Ahmed Naqvi** (1930-1987). Favoured

¹²⁴See Oleg Grabar, „Islamische Ornamentik und Westliche Abstraktion – Kritische Anmerkungen zu einer Wahlverwandtschaft“, in Ornament und Abstraktion, op. cit., p. 73.

¹²⁵Surrealism detaches the word from its actual meaning. Script becomes synonymous with other iconographic elements. Between 1928 and 1936, Magritte developed idiomatic paintings. In “La Trahison des images (Ceci n’est pas une pipe)” Magritte negates in the written subtitle what he painterly figures in the pipe. This can either refer to the text that questions the pictorial representation, or the written sentence which is not the indicated object but letters strung together.

¹²⁶Quddus Mirza, „Illusion of Technology“, in The News on Sunday, January 21, 2001, p. 32.

¹²⁷See Salima Hashmi, „Radicalising tradition“, in Art Link, Australia, Vol. 20, Issue 20, p. 33.

¹²⁸M. N. Sirhandi, op. cit., p. 80.

and patronised by Prime Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy (1893-1963)¹²⁹, the artist experienced a rapid rise to fame between 1954 and 1960. In 1958, Sadequain retreated to Gadani—a remote area on the Karachi coast—where he painted his famous cacti. The cactus series reflects the socio-political realities in Pakistan. They even go so far as to reduce the human form to a skeletal structure, thereby relating it to similar configurations in nature.¹³⁰ Sadequain's vocabulary contained his unique cactus calligraphy and kufic designs, but as with other artists of this period, they also demonstrate his experiments with Cubism. Nevertheless, he was among the first artists to test calligraphy as an art form in the modern sense. Both his cactus calligraphy and his designs are abstract and illegible, while his later calligraphic works become more concerned with the meaning of the written word. These later works have often been criticized as a “retreat into the safety of state-sanctioned calligraphic works.”¹³¹ Sadequain became famous and reached the status of a national artist. The government commissioned him with a large number of public murals, which made his art accessible to a wide public audience.

(Fig. 32) Red Sun Over Cactus Land is an example of how, after their time in Gadani, cacti people were transformed by incorporating calligraphy in a specifically expressionistic manner, making them resemble a rather scary kind of species. A further advance in expressing abstraction was taken by the artist in a remarkable work called Geometric Interlock (Fig.33). The essence of this geometric construction is made up of kufic designs. The figure is withdrawn, but the organic-ness comes from the structures within the slips of knots and ropes, reminiscent of the cacti people. In this work, executed just a year after his success at the Paris Biennial (Sadequain was a laureate winner at the 1961 French Biennial for artists under thirty-five), Sadequain seemed to have discovered, via calligraphy and ornamentation, a path to abstraction; a path he was subsequently soon to replace in favour of the figure again. That this artist was far from seeking pure abstraction is revealed in the backdrop, a two-coloured picture architecture where the distance beyond is never really negated. The painting remains on some kind of threshold. At this point, one should also recall Mark Rothko's paintings, which László Glozer compared with a blind mirror in whose blindness an inconceivable spaciousness is unsealed.

¹²⁹ 1956 he became Pakistans fifth Prime Minister.

¹³⁰ See Salima Hashmi, “Framing the Present“, in Arts and the Islamic World, special volume, 50 Years of Art in Pakistan, no. 32, p. 55.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 54.

Soon after, though, Sadequain returned to expressing political and social injustice, which, he must have felt, could be best achieved in an expressive, figurative approach. His trips abroad certainly exposed him to various artistic achievements and trends. However, Sadequain was mainly drawn to Picasso. A diptych titled Queen of Spades and Jack of Diamonds (Fig.34) from a playing card series is a clear commentary on power, money, and betrayal. Noticeable is the empty, black canvas next to the King, representing the missing partner card. The Queen left the King of Spades for the Jack of Diamonds when the former became poor and the latter rich. The King, therefore, is represented as an intimidated figure with a crow nesting in his head, unlike the triumphant Jack, whose crown emblem is a Mercedes star. The bizarre glance of the Queen is directed towards the Jack, who is holding a racket with the number 99 in his hand instead of the Queen's branch. 99 is a reference to the circle of 99 synonymous with making money.¹³² The two paintings are executed in an expressive style reminiscent of such earlier works as Red Sun Over Cactus Land (Fig. 32).

The comparison with Picasso is best achieved when looking at some of the latter works grappling with ornamentation. In Les Demoiselles des bords de la Seine, d'après Courbet (1950), the ornamental elements portray all the voluptuous curves of the two girlfriends, as well as shades of clothes and light glimmering on the water surface. In Homme au chapeau de paille et au cornet de glace (1938) (Fig. 35), the hat is rendered with chains of yellow spots and an ornamental spiral of swaps.

Shakir Ali, who was normally the one influencing his colleagues, might have been, in the case of calligraphy, influenced by them. He executed a number of calligraphic murals both in Lahore and Islamabad. His contribution to the Punjab Public Library in Lahore (Fig. 36) is a mural of Quranic verses. Although legible, it conveys freedom in terms of writing and is decorated with leaves. There are echoes here to the border decoration and its long tradition in the art of the Islamic book. Shakir Ali surrounds the Quranic verse with leaves but allows the script to break through the border, signifying a great sense of joy and pride towards his own

¹³²See Sadequain in an interview with M. N. Sirhandi, *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 59.

roots and heritage. Shakir Ali also produced purely abstract calligraphic works that were not legible.

There are a vast number of artists that experience the calligraphic tradition in different ways. **Rashid Ahmed Arshed** (born 1937), **Ismail Gulgee** (1926-2007), **Aslam Kamal** (born 1939), **Ozzir Zubi** (?), and **Sardar Mohammad** (born 1924), to name a few, have all partaken in what can be called the calligraphic movement nurturing calligraphic modernism between the late 1950s and 1975.

In the 20th century, the West discovered the script as an art discipline, evoked partly through the media culture and the possibilities of technical reproduction. Is it possible that, following this development, Pakistan saw, in the classical and free form of calligraphy, a way to develop a distinguishable character in modern Pakistani art? It has been strongly suggested that the Islamic cultural renaissance, when calligraphy was state-sanctioned, was only made possible because of the two preceding decades of “liberal” (read: unsanctioned) experiments with this art form. Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee converted handwriting into an abstract ductus. So did Cy Twombly, whose script is a “script without alphabet”¹³³—a scriptural language. Zahoor ul Akhlaq’s scriptural or calligraphic abstractions may be read in terms of this manifestation—the reduction of calligraphy to its rhythmic essence.

Longstanding cultural contacts between the Orient and Europe have existed since the seventh century.¹³⁴ Since the Middle Ages, Quranic verses and the name Allah have decorated the garments of biblical figures and can be seen in the nimbus of the Madonna. Stephan Lochner’s *Annunciation* (ca.1488) shows a vessel with kufic inscription,¹³⁵ and in a painting within a radius by Andrea Mantegna, *Judith and the Head of Holofernes* (around 1500),¹³⁶ pseudo-kufic script ribbons decorate the entrance to the tent. Many more examples could be named but, ultimately, it remains a question of whether these European artists even knew what they were writing. These Arabic letters were understood as exotic decorative devices. In

¹³³Roland Barthes, *Cy Twombly*, (Berlin: n.p., 1983), p. 17.

¹³⁴See R. Ettinghausen, „Der Einfluss der angewandten Künste und der Malerei des Islams auf die Künste Europas“, in *Europa und der Orient*, exhibition catalogue (Berlin: n.p., 1989), p. 165-201.

¹³⁵Stephan Lochner, *Annunciation*, altarpiece (outer side-piece of the altar of the city patrons of Cologne), around 1445, Eichenholz, 261x142 cm, Dom (Marienkapelle), Köln.

¹³⁶Andrea Mantegna (Copy?), *Judith and the head of Holofernes*, around 1500, copper, 38,5x24,5 cm, Museum Narodowe, Krakau.

his Triptych of San Giovenale (1422),¹³⁷ Masaccio knew what he placed within the nimbus of the Madonna. Rudolf Sellheim deciphered the Islamic confession of faith (the shahâda) within the script, and interprets it within the context of the genesis of the painting as a consciously chosen inscription. Appearing as a mirror-image, the shahâda loses its mystical power—Islam cannot be justified in the sight of Christian faith.¹³⁸

In Western modern painting, the acceptance of the Arabic script plays a secondary role. The script mainly serves as a requisite. From May to October in 1910, Munich hosted an extensive exhibition on Meisterwerke mohammedanischer Kunst (masterpieces from Mohammedan art), which was highly appreciated and met with approval all over Europe. The exhibition mirrored a European interest with the Orient that had been kindled since the beginning of the nineteenth century. It acted as a mediator for a new and realistic understanding of the Orient. In the following years, August Macke came to terms with oriental art: calligraphic structures in his ink, Kalligraphische Zeichen II (1912),¹³⁹ indicate an approach to Arabic script (even though the signs on this particular piece could have also derived from East Asian calligraphy). “The impression of the Arabic often overlaps with the East Asian.”¹⁴⁰

In his painting, Shell Garage, Luxor (1963), David Hockney clearly writes the Arabic transcription of Shell, as well as two words on the right-hand side of the painting that are transcriptions of Coca Cola. Hockney uses the integration of Arabic script in order to refer the scene to Luxor and Egypt. Concerning Mark Tobey’s paintings, Paul Klee said that it is with him where we have the genesis of the script.¹⁴¹ Tobey himself confirmed that he *writes* his paintings. Besides the influence of the Arabic script, Tobey’s interest in the line came about with his predilection for Chinese calligraphy. Whereas Tobey wanted to connect Eastern and Western thought content, Pakistani artists like Zahoor ul Akhlaq were more concerned with reviving, reinterpreting, and enacting their own cultural traditions. He achieved this through the reception and adoption of Western elements, which he fused harmoniously with elements from the Eastern world. One of the greatest achievements in his oeuvre was that Western

¹³⁷Masaccio, Trittico di San Giovenale, middle plate La Madonna col Bambino in trono e due angeli, 1422, Cascia.

¹³⁸Rudolf Sellheim, “Die Madonna mit der Schahâda“, in E. Gräf (ed.), Festschrift Werner Caskel, Leiden 1968, p. 308-315.

¹³⁹August Macke, Kalligraphische Zeichen II, 1912, ink, 10,3x16,3 cm, privat

¹⁴⁰Freely translated by myself from Dörte Zbikowski, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁴¹See Hanns H. Heidenheim, Mark Tobey: Das graphische Werk, vol. I, (Düsseldorf: n.p., 1975), N. pag.

modernity never dominated his work: it became directional for his contemporaries and students alike.

Chughtai is considered to have taken a gradual shift towards modernity from within his own culture by consciously incorporating Islamic and Mughal aesthetics in his paintings. The next step was taken by Zubeida Agha and Shakir Ali. Agha made art criticism aware of modernity in art in Pakistan and contributed largely with her efforts of exhibiting and providing space for contemporary art in the subsequent years. Shakir Ali gave artists, who were already searching for new paths, a direction and the necessary courage.

3.16 Zahoor ul Akhlaq: A Fascination for Two-Dimensionality

A new figure in Pakistan's artistic landscape appeared with Zahoor ul Akhlaq (1941-1999). Breaking and reinterpreting tradition is what Zahoor probably did more than any of his contemporaries in Pakistan. He worked towards "the re-evaluation of tradition to the extent that tradition is no longer opposed to modernity,"¹⁴² as Homi Bhabha commented on the work of Shahzia Sikander. Shakir Ali—Akhlaq's mentor, ustad, and friend—had not so much broken with tradition but rather alluded to a better way to connect with tradition.

In his book on Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Roger Connah uses the phrase, "The Enigma of Departure,"¹⁴³ which he describes as being a useful way to explore an artist's starting point. Akhlaq's starting point can be brought together with the influence of Shakir Ali. His first encounter with modern art took place in 1956, when Shakir Ali held an exhibition at Frere Hall Gallery in Karachi. At the time, Akhlaq was attending the Sindh Madressah where he took painting classes. He also made life studies at a studio along Elphinstone Street in Karachi. In 1958, he joined the NCA in Lahore. He studied under the influence of his teacher, Shakir Ali, and in 1962 graduated with a National Diploma in Fine Art. Shakir Ali was appointed principal of the NCA and had already, by the late fifties, begun to move away from his own neo-cubist version. Despite the strong ties Zahoor developed with his teacher (later on he even lived with Shakir Ali), the influence from the artist who brought

¹⁴²Homi Bhabha, "Chillava Klatch: Shahzia Sikander interviewed by Homi Bhabha", in Shahzia Sikander, exhibition catalogue, (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, 1998), p. 16.

¹⁴³Roger Connah, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, (Toronto: LAAL, 2000), p.1.

Modernism/Cubism to the country was not strong enough, and reflected little on one of his most eminent students, Zahoor ul Akhlaq. What became visible was the calligraphic tradition that Zahoor had been exposed to in Karachi in the years before he joined the NCA. The great calligrapher, Yousaf Dehlvi, was Akhlaq's father's friend, and the young Zahoor went to watch him give lessons every day. Dehlvi refused to teach the young man because he thought he should be studying. "But I watched how he worked, often repeating a single word, thirty, forty times, until he was satisfied. He taught me about composition, and how to look for visual balance,"¹⁴⁴ Akhlaq recalls.

Another early influence on Akhlaq, which accompanied him almost throughout his entire artistic career, came from Mark Sponenburgh's Bauhaus philosophy. The Bauhaus aesthetics of design and Paul Klee, a teacher at the Bauhaus, came to be a great influence on Zahoor ul Akhlaq. During the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s—the time of Ayub Khan's military regime—Lahore's art circle was openly pro-modernist. Rasheed Aareen described this as a period in which "most experimental and innovative work was produced...it defined its historical location not only within Pakistan but also within the genealogy of the history of international modernism...and," referring to the younger generation of artists in the 1990s, "without trying to be explicitly Pakistani."¹⁴⁵

3.16.1 Early Works

Hardly any material was available from Akhlaq's early period. If one compares one of Shakir Ali's works (Fig. 13)—executed in the late 50s, when he had already distanced himself from Cubism and reintroduced allusions to his earlier experiences and his lifetime fascination for Ajanta and Altamira cave paintings in his works—with one of Akhlaq's untitled student's works (Fig. 37), one can make out his teacher's influences. There are similarities in colour and in the treatment of the surface, but the lines and edges show little indication of cubic or geometrical forms. A 1964 composition (Fig. 38) still shows a relation to Shakir Ali, but also points towards the experimentation with the two-dimensional space on a non-figurative base,

¹⁴⁴Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Zahoor ul Akhlaq: A Retrospective 1961-1998, exhibition folder Gallery NCA, Lahore, 1998.

¹⁴⁵Rasheed Aareen, in Virginia Whiles, "The Politics of Authenticity in Indian Art", Paper: Paris Conference, February 2001, C.N.R.S., N. pag.

and the juxtaposing of geometric forms that eventually led to various interpretations of the rhythm of calligraphic forms.

It was also the time when he went to Swat to study folk art and architecture, a place Sponenburgh once said was “physically one of the most attractive regions of Pakistan.”¹⁴⁶ Situated in the north of the Northwest Frontier, this rather isolated region has a colourful and complicated history. The excavated archaeological sites range from prehistoric caves to Aryan graveyards to Buddhist monasteries. The decorative arts of Swat are executed with a fine balance of design, form, and function. The architectural forms found beneath the mantle of chip carvings, as well as the pronounced use of ornament on wood, cannot be understood as decoration merely for decoration’s sake. The relationship between indigenous materials and environmental imperatives has been clearly achieved by the craftsmen of Swat. In the summer of 1960, the National College of Arts in Lahore had “taken independent initiative in originating an index of indigenous design with a view to recording, collecting, and documenting a visual tradition of which Pakistan can be justly proud.”¹⁴⁷ Knowing that Zahoor ul Akhlaq went to Swat during his college years with a team of students and staff put together by Sponenburgh, one can most likely assume that he joined that group of individuals. However, just how fascinated Akhlaq was by this visit, and just how much he was bound to his rich and varied tradition, would soon be made visible in some of his drawings and etchings.

3.16.2 Swat Carvings, Calligraphy, and Printmaking

Zahoor was awarded with a British Council scholarship from 1966 to 1969. He completed two post-graduate studies at the Hornsey College of Art and The Royal College of Art in London. During this time, he immersed himself in printmaking and discovered his fascination for Mughal miniatures.¹⁴⁸ From London, he “proceeded to Paris where he worked in the printmaking studio of the Master printmaker, Stanley Hayter, whose ‘Studio 17’ is world

¹⁴⁶Mark Sponenburgh, “Folk Arts of Swat Valley”, in Contemporary Arts in Pakistan, Summer 1961, Vol. II, No.2, p. 34.

¹⁴⁷Ibid, p. 51.

¹⁴⁸Ironically, he discovered this fascination for Mughal miniatures, which was his very heritage, in London. In fact, it is not that ironic if one considers that the Museums in London contain more exquisite and better preserved miniature collections than those in the Lahore Museum.

renowned.”¹⁴⁹ As suggested in the rhythmic composition in Fig. 38, his interest and experiments with calligraphy and rhythm certainly derive from his childhood experiences in Karachi.¹⁵⁰ However, as Naqvi noted,¹⁵¹ one can see the influences of Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928-85), Mark Tobey (1890-1976) and, later, Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967) on his work as well. Naqvi’s observation is elucidated if we compare one of Shemza’s works (Fig. 39) with an etching by Zahoor (Fig. 40). I believe, however, that Zahoor’s etching quite clearly follows some of his earlier drawings and etchings, executed in 1966-68 (Fig. 41, Fig. 42), and are less influenced from Shemza’s work than by Swat carvings. In Fig. 43, the lid of a woodcarver’s tool box illustrates the similarities. Zahoor did not merely copy the motifs skilfully carved into the wood (although that would have made it easier for an art historian) he took the rhythm—the repetition of a motif—and worked it onto paper (See also Fig. 44, 45). The repetition of one and the same rhythm is very common in Islamic culture, as practised not only in prayers, spoken and sung, but also in the visual and decorative cultures, such as abstract forms and the arabesque. As defined by Probst-Biraben in 1905, abstract patterning is “the ornamental translation of mystical Muslim thought, its very symbolism.” And further “the connection of art with the Muslim mystic desirous of tracing phenomenal multiplicity back to the divine unity, and the emanation back to the initial source.”¹⁵²

Zahoor’s own interest in Sufism, the esoteric dimension of Islam, is a well-known fact, although he spoke of it only later in interviews. A central doctrine of Sufism—“unity in multiplicity”—seems to occupy Zahoor’s works during the 1960s and 1970s where, due to the World of Islam Festival, these questions have taken on new dimensions. “The rhythmic repetition of abstract patterns recalled the ritual of dhikr, the tireless repetition of ejaculatory litanies by the devotees of mystical brotherhoods.”¹⁵³

Whether these symbols harbour any meaning is not the point: Symbols used by wood carvers in Swat Valley today, although they may have once been considered meaningful, are nevertheless now used merely as decorative ornament. As suggested by Johannes Kalter,

¹⁴⁹Marjorie Hussain, “In Search of Aesthetics”, in *Art: Tuesday Review*, Dec. 24-30, 1991, p. 18.

¹⁵⁰see above, p.63.

¹⁵¹compare Akbar Naqvi, op.cit, p. 446.

¹⁵²Probst-Biraben, 1907, in Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture*, Topkapi Palace Museum Library MSH. 1956, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995, p. 76.

¹⁵³Gülru Necipoğlu, op. cit., p. 76.

some of these ornaments even contain symbols that are rooted in the pre-Islamic era.¹⁵⁴ For the work of Zahoor ul Akhlaq, this signified his deep and sincere concern with, not only the high culture of calligraphy, Mughal art, and architecture, but also the low culture, since craftsmen in the Islamic world were generally not particularly respected. Zahoor knew that the woodworkers of the Swat valley were outstanding, since cultures of the central areas of the Islamic world were not used to paying much attention to wooden objects (except for large urban centres, princes' houses, mosques, and saint's tombs, where massive panelled doors with carved decoration are to be found). The wooden furnishings of the peasant population consist of a few simple items. House furniture as we know it does not exist in their tradition. Kalter relates the style of furnishing in the high mountain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan to the situation in the wooded mountains of the Hindukush and Karakorum. In contrast to the deforestation of the Mediterranean area, Anatolia, and Iran, the Afghan and Pakistan mountain areas are blessed with natural prerequisites which lead to an intensive utilization of wood as a raw material.¹⁵⁵

3.16.3 The Grid's Function

The grid was made prominent by American minimalists during the 1960s and 1970s. Within Modernism, we can trace obvious precedents such as Piet Mondrian, but other artists such as Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, who were a part of the "Wiener Secessionisten" (Viennese Secessionists), developed a pronounced propensity towards abstract geometrical forms as well. With its distinct chess board pattern, the graphic square art came to be known as "Quadratstil", as opposed to the taunted "Nudlstil"—the floral form of art nouveau that was developed by the Viennese counterparts in Brussels, Munich, and Paris. As I will try to elucidate, the grid—an architectonic device for different variations of geometric compositions—may have been rediscovered by Zahoor ul Akhlaq in the West, but is as present today in the Islamic world (e.g. in architecture) as it always has been. Rosalind Krauss explains what the grid signified for many artists:

¹⁵⁴See Johannes Kalter, *The Arts and Crafts of the Swat Valley: Living Traditions in the Hindu Kush*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p.140. I would like to thank Max Klimburg for notifying me of this publication.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

“...the grid announces among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse...The physical qualities of the surface, we could say, are mapped on to the aesthetic dimension of the same surface. And these two planes—the physical and the aesthetic—are demonstrated to be the same plane: co-extensive, and...coordinate. Considered in this way, the bottom line of the grid is a naked and determined materialism.”¹⁵⁶

Originating in 1918-19, Mondrian’s grid compositions are his most significant approach towards the system of the ornamental. These paintings show regular frames supplied with asymmetrical linear structures, or colour elements, which give the surface its grid structure. The regular frames stand for the matrix of the ornamental that provides admittance to the total plane. In a way, Mondrian was accredited with the method of the plane. Ad Reinhardt, after graduating from Stuart Davis’s cubism, needed to go beyond Mondrian by shedding a lot that Mondrian did not.

Zahoor ul Akhlaq justified his extensive use of the grid by using geometry that unites space and gives way to ideas that flow freely. At the same time, the grid reflects his fascination with the geometric concept of Muslim architecture. Since ancient times, geometry has always played an important role in the Islamic world. In Islamic encyclopaedias, we find architecture and crafts classified as sub-categories of practical geometry alongside mechanics.

Geometry, as opposed to arithmetic, is

“much more conducive to the visual thinking and graphic imagination of designers who worked with basic tools, [and] seems to have played a central role in medieval Islamic architectural practice and the decorative arts. Besides elevating the status of architecture and the crafts by giving them a respectable scientific foundation, the abstract language of geometry provided an aesthetic basis for design.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶Rosalind Krauss, “Grids”, in *Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 9-10, in Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p.75.

¹⁵⁷Gülru Necipoğlu, op. cit., p. 139.

In medieval Islamic architectural practice, geometry was regarded as the basis and foundation of architecture, and yet late medieval and early modern Islamic classifications of the various fields of geometry only elaborate earlier ones.

Scholarship on Islamic art and architecture developed in the early twentieth century. During the 1960s and 1970s, partly due to the World of Islam festival in 1976, a vast number of scholars published contrary opinions on the values of Islamic geometric design. While one side was trying to demonstrate that Islamic art was deeply connected with the Muslim world view of tawhid—the absolute oneness of God—and can therefore only be understood completely by a Muslim, it was also rejecting the Western interpretation of Islamic art as being purely decorative. Scholars on that side also referred to two-dimensional geometric designs as containing cosmological meanings and being, a priori, religious and mystical. On the other side we find scholars like Gombrich, who was the first to criticize the problematic approach in the Arts of Islam exhibition.¹⁵⁸ He disputed basic interpretations of symbolic meanings that resemble the deeper mysteries of the tradition, and in “The Sense of Order,”¹⁵⁹ made it clear that there is no concrete evidence for interpretations like this. Grabar, like Gombrich, viewed geometric patterns as primarily decorative.

“Geometry really works only as an intermediary. As an intermediary, it leaves the viewer or user a freedom of choice no other intermediary seems to offer. In this respect, as a harbinger of free choice, geometry is a most dangerous mediator...The penalty of freedom in the arts is loss of meaning. Its reward is accessibility to all. Humble triangles on a dress or in the weaving of a basket or the very sophisticated brick walls of Iranian towers share an ability to make us wonder what they mean, because, like moths or butterflies, we are attracted to an abstraction which seems to be devoid of cultural specificity. It is only meant to be beautiful.”¹⁶⁰

In abstract patterns, Gombrich and Grabar saw the decorative purpose only, while others preferred to charge the same patterns with a priori symbolic meanings. Gombrich denied that within the process of visual communication there lie culturally significant contextual factors,

¹⁵⁸The Arts of Islam exhibition accompanied the Arts of Islam Festival.

¹⁵⁹E. H. Gombrich, The Sense of Order: A Study in Psychology of Decorative Art, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979).

¹⁶⁰Oleg Grabar, 1992, p. 151, in Gülru Necipoğlu, op. cit., p. 83.

and he doubted that philosophy, literary theory, theology, or mysticism played any role in bolstering the field of visual aesthetics.¹⁶¹

Contrary to these assertions, and probably not even being aware of their existence, Zahoor ul Akhlaq used geometry to create universality in his paintings. He was at the same time, however, very much convinced that he was using elements that had evolved within his culture and were thus charged with specific meanings. If he thought that those meanings could only be understood by Muslims, then his task would have been to decode and universalise them. “It is the Muslim contribution rather than the Muslim usage of geometry and geometric form in art and architecture which fascinates me. This geometry provides me a form of structure for my work whether it is painting or sculpture.”¹⁶²

Fig. 46 and Fig. 47 reveal how a similar subject and composition were transferred onto the grid. In London, Zahoor rediscovered the rectangular format that he borrowed from South Asian manuscripts. A manuscript page of the Windsor Padshahnama exemplifies how this frame-within-a-framework looked in the original context (Fig. 48). The left-hand side shows a text page that was written in nastaliq script and set within a decorated border that dates further back. Both the text page and the painting on the right-hand side are not placed in the centre but slightly outside of it. Zahoor followed this example and moved his inner frame out of the centre as well. “The shaped canvas, an American influence of the sixties, and the foreign theme, a Japanese event, have been adapted to the native manuscript format.”¹⁶³ The laced border at the bottom of the painting-within-the-painting is still visible in the latter work. However, it is abstracted in order to create a harmonic connection with the brushstrokes that are placed within the grid works. As it appears in the painting of 1971 (Fig. 47), the laced border could have been derived from architectural decorations as seen in the Great Mosque in Madyan (Fig. 49) or the mosque at Arin (Fig. 50, Fig. 51). Similar comparisons are drawn in order to trace the roots of a painting by Philip Taaffe (Fig. 52), where Markus Buderlin juxtaposed a wall panel from Ghazna, Afghanistan (Fig. 53).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹See Gülru Necipoğlu, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁶²Zahoor ul Akhlaq in an interview with Quddus Mirza, in The News on Sunday, December 13, 1998, p. 32.

¹⁶³Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, op cit., pp. 93-94.

¹⁶⁴See Markus Buderlin, in Ornament und Abstraktion, op. cit., p. 82.

The way the grid was spread out on the canvas in the 1982 painting (Fig. 48) is reminiscent of Milo Cleveland Beach's descriptions of how the double shamsa of the Windsor Padshahnama was executed: "Prior to the execution of the illumination, a geometric grid was impressed into the paper and is still visible beneath the central gold areas."¹⁶⁵ The geometric grid in the Windsor Padshahnama shamsa had the purpose of giving structure to the paper's space. It initially meant to do the same in Zahoor's painting (Fig. 48), but Zahoor went beyond the grid's function of assistance to achieve a symbiosis between colour, line, and texture—key factors in the paintings of the Mughal time. "Instead of concentrating on a particular object, I tried to create a total surface, or environment, and to let the viewer decide how to react to it."¹⁶⁶ Due to Zahoor's own interpretation of the Renaissance perspective,¹⁶⁷ he was very much in favour of letting the viewer participate in his paintings. This participation was emphasised by framing one of his recurrent motifs, such as the human body or nuclear cloud, within the rather abstract form of the grid.

¹⁶⁵ Milo Cleveland Beach, in King of the World: The Padshahnama, op. cit., p. 159. On shamsa (sunburst, little sun, or rosette) see also M. C. Beach on the same page or The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India, The Kevorkian Album, op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ Zahoor ul Akhlaq, in an interview with Salima Hashmi, in Zahoor ul Akhlaq: A Retrospective: 1961-1998, exhibition catalogue Gallery NCA – Lahore, 1998, N. pag.

¹⁶⁷ See above, p. 54.

3.17 Resisting Populism and Islamisation

The Impact on Art during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Reign

1971 – 1977, 1977 – 1988

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's (1928-1979) Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and campaigns against Ayub Khan resulted in his replacement by Yahya Khan (1917-80), another military general. Pakistan's first national elections in 1970 would sweep the PPP of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (r. 1971-1977) to power, while at the same time causing the war and consequent split of Pakistan to create Bangladesh in 1971. Bhutto's populism intended to unite classes by introducing a number of land and labour reforms and the nationalisation of industries and banks. But his commitment to socialism was only half-hearted, shown also in his failure to abolish feudalism. In foreign affairs Bhutto broke with the pro-Western stance in favour of an Islamic and Third World orbit.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the religious opposition grew stronger and after the breakaway of East Pakistan (which became Bangladesh in 1971) and the consequent diminishing of the non-Muslim minority, pressure for Islamisation grew. This pro-Islamic step was intensified under the following military regime with **Zia-ul-Haq (r. 1977-1988)**, who, for whatever motivation, saw Islamisation as the only way to control the country. Given these political circumstances, it is interesting to see how the art world coped with and reacted to this drastic change, which ultimately paved the way towards the sectarian division and violence that Pakistan is still suffering from today.

The late sixties and early seventies were a time of social and political unrest, yet compared to the following years of upheaval under the brutal military rule of Zia-ul-Haq, the 60s and 70s can be viewed as a healthy time of agitation where criticism was expressed. Demands arose for both democracy and a revival of socialist ideals, and were expressed in such artists' works as those of **Ijaz ul Hassan** (b. 1940). The constitution of 1973 expressed an objective to ensure equal rights for women under the law. In many sectors of public life change became visible. Women from the middle and lower-middle class became more visible in such jobs as advertising and television; women even entered the Foreign Service and became Ambassadors. By the seventies, women in Pakistan had already successfully taken charge of the teaching sector in the predominantly male-dominated art world. However, when speaking of these changes it must not be forgotten that the majority of Pakistan's population—the poor

¹⁶⁸Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan*, (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 208.

and uneducated masses who were mostly in service to the upper and middle class intelligentsia rallying for various ideological and social causes in the streets of Lahore and Karachi—hardly ever benefited from any of these achievements. Ijaz ul Hassan intended to address the masses. His socialist predilections found expression in the large scale paintings he used, together with the autonomous group, “Artists’ Equity,” in 1974 and 1975, to address the rural public. Thus Firdoz (Fig. 54) is an example of the new socio-political belief of the painter who, in order to address the masses, realised non-figurative art had to give way to imagery and suitable content that was taken from familiar images such as those in the film industry. Abstract or non-figurative art in Pakistan was generally a short-lived phenomenon that took place in the late 50s and throughout the 60s. Ijaz ul Hassan juxtaposed the female cinema star, Firdoz, with a Vietnamese woman holding a gun and a baby. Addressing the horror of the Vietnam atrocities can be interpreted as international solidarity expressed specifically within art practices in Third World countries. Though Hassan might have produced a taste of pop art, it was unique in the country, and as a short-lived phenomenon might be better termed social or popular realism. This short-lived experiment can therefore be seen as a game played across the shifting ground of a visual culture, but was insufficient for the politics required to address the masses. Ijaz ul Hassan soon retreated from his social and political commentary and turned to landscape painting in a photorealist style. His adoption of the cinema poster is a practice that would be fully rediscovered and refashioned by young Pakistani artists in the 1990s and beyond.

Islamic expression in Pakistan was and is not monochromatic. There are Sunni and Shia lines, but there is also the puritanical Deobandi sect from which Zia comes. All of these coexist with Sufism and its mystical dimensions are very much part of Pakistan’s regional cultural identity. In the course of his military reign, Zia-ul-Haq imposed “acceptable” dress codes as well as codes for behaviour and language. Consequently, literature and media were monitored and censored while dancing in public was prohibited. A number of laws were introduced that clearly discriminated against women and such minorities as non-Muslims. In 1981, the ulama were inducted as judges for the first time in Pakistan’s history. In the course of this Islamisation process the cultural climate changed. It had enjoyed patronage and social acceptability under Zia’s predecessors—although mostly for ideological reasons in nation- and identity-building—but it now had to suit the new cultural construct. This cultural construct, in accordance with a pan-Islamic trend, favoured non-figurative painting unless such paintings depicted the “Father of the Nation” or the President. Sculpture was

consequently frowned upon the same way. Calligraphy and landscape painting were found to be representative of both an Islamic and a national-rural identity. Many artists, therefore, turned to calligraphy in order to obtain state patronage. Sadequain was one of the artists opting more seriously for Quranic calligraphy during the time of Zia's regime and he has received criticism for it.

Progress and modernisation did not change rural people's lives very much. As a result, Islamisation did not strongly affect their traditional lifestyle. Most of the new changes were felt by the urban middle and upper classes, in particular women. Resistance, therefore, came from political and human rights activists, journalists, local law associations, and educated elite women. Likewise, according to Salima Hashmi, women artists collectively resisted calligraphy and moved away from oil on canvas—a male-dominated medium—in favour of water-based mediums and print techniques.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, I still came across a number of oil paintings from that decade: Perhaps the reason women did not entirely resist the medium was due to the fact that it was, at that time, hierarchically still superior and hence more valuable.

Even though artists like Sadequain had reacted to socio-political grievances in the 1960s, and even though Abdul Rahim Nagori (b. 1938), Zahoor ul Akhlaq, and a significant number of female artists became apparent artistic voices during Zia's military regime, they were still restrained voices that eventually had to place timidity and compromise in the service of survival.

Zia ul Haq imposed martial law and embarked upon the reconstitution of Islamic fundamentalist ideology. "As the keeper of a nation's conscience, the artist in Pakistan found a new connection with the common man,"¹⁷⁰ writes Nilofur Farrukh. It was the time when **Abdul Rahim Nagori** commented on the violence that erupted in Sindh, his adopted home, identifying with the oppressed people there. His work shows a less traditional approach to objectivity. Within the flatness and treatment of the picture plane in Fig. 55, Nagori's approach and mannerisms may reveal some influence from Shakir Ali's paintings of the late sixties and early seventies,. In the caricature style of Tower of Power (Fig. 56), one is

¹⁶⁹See: Salima Hashmi, Unveiling the Visible: Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan, (Pakistan: ActionAid, 2002), pp. 8-9.

¹⁷⁰Nilofur Farrukh, "Echoes of Socio-Political History", Arts & the Islamic World, Special Volume, 50 Years of Art in Pakistan, No. 32, 1997, p. 61.

reminded of the subcultures and, in particular, the comics coming out of New York's East Village in the late 1960s. Philip Guston (1913-1980) is a painter who drew inspiration from these comics. The figures, drawn in a childlike style, are also reminiscent of David Hockney's figures in his paintings of the early 1960s. The Untitled canvas (Fig. 55) is divided into three components, whose symbols do not attempt to hide the socio-political inequity. The dark and larger space at the bottom belongs to the suppressed masses; darkness symbolising their future. In vicarious relation to the masses, Nagori painted a woman in purdah and a prostrated figure in white, symbolizing poverty and despair. The marble mazar (mausoleum) represents Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Qaid e Azam, and his idealism to be a great leader of prosperity and peace. By giving the people (as represented in the prostrated figure) and the mazar the colour white, Nagori connects the two. But both are petrified due to the black wolf haloed by the oppressive Sindhi sun. Tower of Power (Fig. 56) illustrates, though on an ironical level, Pakistan's hierarchical control. This painting again shows a three-tiered canvas, although it is not visible on first viewing. The bottom part is paved with the common man. Atop the common people are the bureaucrats, who cooperate with and are outranked by the clergy, who in turn are influenced by the military, who are themselves finally dominated by the uppermost level (alluded to in the cap): The United States of America. In these paintings, Nagori articulates rawness, psychological risk, and the personal put at the mercy of the oppressor.

Nagori earned his Bachelor's and Master's degree from the Punjab University, and established the Fine Art department at Sindh University in 1970. His comments on the political situation in the country in the 1980s are significant and, either because of his social background or his friendship with the dictator, he got away with it like no other artist would have at the time. Zahoor ul Akhlaq responded with delicacy to major external events, which shaped the fate of the nation and humanity in general. His interpretation of the Nawabpur tragedy of 1991, where women were forced to walk naked in the streets by a feudal land owner, was perhaps intellectual, yet it still revealed his heartfelt concerns about this socio-political injustice. Anwar Saeed (b. 1956) made protest art during the time of martial law. His work was politically motivated and incidents such as Bhutto's execution in 1979 and the public hangings in Lahore encouraged his highly reflective works.

Salima Hashmi's art of protest has many faces. One of her series of thirteen paintings called Dast-e-teh-e-Sang (The Hand Caught Under the Rock) is also the title of a book by her father,

Faiz Ahmed Faiz—a poet of protest against social injustices. For Salima Hashmi and other women artists in the early 1980s, art became a way to demonstrate political activism. Naazish Ataulah (b.1950) has worked with metaphors such as the Chaadar to express protest with the current political situation. Chaadar VI (Fig. 57) refers to the shawl that is used by women in Pakistan to cover their body or parts of their body. The texture of the chaadar is meticulously rendered through an aquatint technique, suggesting hiding as much as revealing. Claustrophobically, the piece of cloth—spread out as it is—covers the lower half of the work, and the end of the cloth is hanging freely in the upper part of the print. The bias created in the work can be interpreted as a reference to or attribute of the chaadar, representing protection and comfort against oppression and lies, hiding and revealing, and the inner and the outer.

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, National Exhibitions were held in both East and West Pakistan to help artistic ideas travel between the two parts of the country. These exhibitions continued to be held after the breakaway of Bangladesh in the cities of Islamabad and Lahore to underline official cultural policy. Since 1977, women artists have won significant numbers of awards. At the 1981 National Exhibition, works by Salima Hashmi and Jamila Masood were removed for containing “unacceptable political content,”¹⁷¹ as were works by Jamil Naqsh (b. 1937), known as the painter of women and pigeons, whose female nudes did not underline the state’s official idea of an Islamic social morality. At the 1983 National Exhibition, “fifteen women artists signed a women artists’ manifesto drafted by Salima Hashmi, Lalarukh, and I.A. Rehman.”¹⁷² This manifesto was never made public but as Hashmi proclaims, “the act of getting together was symbolic of their growing awareness of a possible focus for their artistic practice.”¹⁷³

In Karachi a number of female artists including **Naheed Raza** (b.1947), **Meher Afroz** (b. 1948), **Qudsia Nisar** (b. 1948), and **Riffat Alvi** (b. 1948) moved towards an intrinsic association with mythology, philosophy, and the spiritual, as well as taking private journeys into their art making. Mohenjodaro became inspirational for Meher Afroz and Riffat Alvi, and the Chauwkandi tombs were likewise inspirational for Naheed Raza. Ancient relics, seals, and layers of texture and design from Mohenjodaro became graffiti-like scribbles in Qudsia Nisar’s and Meher Afroz’s paintings. The former used a Paul Klee idiom, adding Chinese

¹⁷¹Salima Hashmi, Unveiling the Visible, op.cit., p.9.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 91.

calligraphy together with transparent washes and brush strokes, while the latter relied on heavy texture in both her etchings, intaglios, and paintings, which mostly evolved from her prints. Both artists referred to time and memory, or time and history Afroz did so by building up and reconstructing layer upon layer and Nisar did so by dismantling them.

With the quasi-mystical search for the origins in history (natural and early history) found in the works of these women artists, there is a shared common interest with international artists¹⁷⁴ in the 1970s generated by Earth Art/Land Art. The preoccupation with the spiritual and mythological moods of these works can be seen as a silent reaction to the socio-political situation of the time, which manifests itself in their art-making as a retreat towards spirituality. Poetics of abstraction can be traced back to the first decade of the twentieth century, namely to the lyrical approach of Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky, who are, as we now know, dear to many artists in Pakistan and India. Many artists were beholden to the spiritual language of Klee and Kandinsky, both in writing and in painting, and it had a strong effect on them.

Lubna Agha (b. 1949) was yet another artist from Karachi whose work during the 70s and 80s shifted from an abstract, non-objective character towards figurative art. It was also indebted to the spiritual in art. Works like Painting in White (Fig. 58) reference her early landscapes: The vertical and horizontal lines accompanied with splashes of colour, dominantly red, resemble a violent intervention as much as a calligraphic abstraction. From here, Lubna Agha began adding graffiti and decorative forms. In Untitled (Fig. 59), Ahmed Parvez' influence can be seen, although less decoratively than in his own work. In 1981, she moved to California. When she exhibited her new works five years later in Pakistan, the change in favour of the figurative was clearly visible. Painting in Blue (Fig. 60) is an assemblage of human forms, patterns, fish, and different designs. The trees are derived from paintings she had done earlier, one of which is called Root (Fig. 61). Root owes its layout and decorative devices to miniature painting from the Pahari region, in particular the trees, although they have been flattened to become even more patchwork, as in Painting in Blue (Fig. 60), building up the background of the whole painting. Three lines, leading from the top of the trees to the bottom, where they end as roots, trisect and elongate the painting at the same time. The resulting horizontal lines can be interpreted as labyrinths across which the newly-born or the unborn with umbilical cords connect and guide the falling bodies. If the

¹⁷⁴See for instance works by Susan Rothenberg.

roots refer to Pakistan (since living abroad), then the content of the meandering bodies can certainly be interpreted as a message or reflection of the situation in her country.

3.18 Modernism versus Postmodernism

Néstor García Canclini claims that postmodernist movements in Latin America “...prepare the ground for a rethinking of the links between tradition, modernity and postmodernity.”¹⁷⁵ This, I believe, is equally true for many Asian countries where over the past fifty years, the visual arts have been shaped by interaction between their own art community and art from overseas. And, as with nationalist debates, modern art in many Asian countries has been fraught with contentions and disunity. Yet, before turning to Postmodernism we need to define some terms and review how Modernism developed in Pakistan.

“Modernism” refers to the time of the Isms approximately after the year 1850 where artistic articulation was brought forward in a more forced and necessarily rhetoric form inherent in the new autonomy of the art work. “Modernization” denotes those processes of scientific and technological advance. Modernization also refers to the transformation of society through the growing impact of the machine. “Modernity” is seen as the historical stage where due to changes caused by modernization, social and cultural conditions changed and new social relations between people and classes of people occurred. Hence “modernity” refers to the cultural period where artistic “modernism” and artistic “avant-garde” are opposed to each other, depend on each other, yet also contradict each other. Modernism, as understood by western art theory, is characterised by its logic of further development, a logic of surpassing previous positions: be it in the sense of ameliorating or radicalising within painting, sculpture, music, etc. and whether in the sense of experimenting or questioning the validity of each approach. This way of defining modernism through the condition of production and reception, when applied to the development of art in postcolonial cultures runs the risk of marginalizing

¹⁷⁵Néstor García Canclini, *Beyond the Fantastic. Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, Gerardo Mosquera (Ed.), (London: 1995, inIVA), p. 20.

those artistic productions as sad figures “mimicking”¹⁷⁶, as Homi Bhabha justly called it, a certain modern subject of western artistic achievement. When modernism took shape in the first decade of the twentieth century across Europe and on to South Asia, as a British colony it there took on its own and incomplete process. While the post-independent state of India achieved a balanced growth of industry this can hardly be claimed for Pakistan. Although industrialization is still in progress in the predominantly agricultural India and class politics are still relevant, India, five decades after Independence, is now a potentially global economic power. Pakistan’s industry and its development have mostly stagnated due to political instabilities; international giants like Microsoft or the like are far from being interested in investing in the country.

Despite these pessimistic prognoses one needs to take into account what Geeta Kapur says: “Modernism as it develops in postcolonial cultures has the oddest retroactive trajectories, and these make up a parallel aesthetics.”¹⁷⁷ Having pointed out some of these aesthetics earlier it is necessary to localize the trajectories of modernism in Pakistan alongside historically and politically based forms of change. If we measure modernism in Pakistan with modernist Art History that has located the centre with its frame of reference for contemporary art practice within Western Europe’s cultural boundaries – later to include North America - then it must be said that modernism came to Pakistan, like most post-colonial and Third World countries on a detour, late and quick. Colonialism and the ethnographic plunder of Third World artefacts went hand in hand to help Western European artists overcome nineteenth-century academism. The Anti-Colonialist struggle was also expressed in terms of art and culture and within South Asia it was best demonstrated with the Bengal renaissance and its attempts to create a Pan-Asianism emphasizing spirituality against European materialism as noted earlier¹⁷⁸. Pre-independence artists within the South Asian subcontinent had developed their own modernism, partly rejecting Western influences and endorsing themselves by adopting nationalism and medieval pictorial conventions. For the Muslim artist Chughtai whose career started within the undivided Subcontinent, we saw a similar trajectory. As opposed to Pan-Asianism he probed Pan-Islam and in opposition to Indian nationalism he converged around a Punjabi regionalism. Although we witnessed the first generation of artists in Pakistan initially turning West for inspiration they were at the same time seeking to retrace their notions of

¹⁷⁶Homi K. Bhabha, „Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse“, in Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 85.

¹⁷⁷Geeta Kapur, When Was Modernism, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p. 297.

¹⁷⁸See: p.33.

origin. That this venture was far from positing a national identity and intended more in a mystical sense to reach a non-historical state of being has been demonstrated. Although these purely artistic intentions feared being incorporated into a state controlled struggle for national and self definition, it must be emphasised that many artists managed to maintain their artistic integrity by withstanding cultural politics.

In the 1960s Western modernism itself began losing its grip over the creativity of a postmodern world with cultural decentralisation in process. It seems strange perhaps to speak of postmodernism in Pakistan where there are still such pre-modern establishments as feudalism and laws such as the Law of Evidence or the Hudood ordinances, introduced during the Zia era! Yet, it demonstrates clearly that both concepts, modernism and postmodernism deserve serious consideration. Their articulations come from different countries inviting an understanding of different determining conditions such as specific social, historical and political frameworks. Summarizing - from a Western point of view - it can be said that the art of modernism underlies from the start the notion of historical necessity. Whereas postmodernism is the attempt to draft change in a different way, beyond historical models. And, to use Ziauddin Sardar's words: "from the perspective of non-western societies, ...postmodernism is all about moving forward to tradition"¹⁷⁹ It is certainly difficult to talk of a typical artistic form that is conceived as postmodern as we negotiate the removal of typically modernist barriers between 'high art' and 'popular culture' as much as we explore the commodities of the consumer world entering art production. In this way the pleasures of art were made accessible to a wider public while at the same time critically questioning the principle of mass media distribution. The crisis of Western modernism in the 1960s prompted a range of theories regarding synthesis, eclecticism and plurality in style. What followed in the Western art of the seventies, eighties, or nineties were fewer conceptual differences in art and the conclusion that there is no single possibility in postmodernism. Minority discourse and popular areas of culture, previously marginalised, are now incorporated. Postmodernism could therefore also be identified as a culture where those artists typically marginalized by modernism are now being foregrounded.

¹⁷⁹Ziauddin Sardar, "Surviving Postmodernism", Postmodernism and the Other. The new Imperialism of Western Culture, (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 273.

In Pakistan the new generation of artists emerging in the 1990s seems to care little about post-colonial discourse (they have no experience of colonialism) and little enthusiasm for a 'fake' contrived coherence desired to establish an urgently needed identity. In a conscious postmodern approach they strip off the burden of cultural baggage and endorse the new transnational or internationalism that they experience abroad as well as on the doorstep of their Third World homes through internet and cable TV. Increasing possibilities for travel abroad are offered to young artists be it either to exhibitions or to participate in one of the many artists-in-residence programmes which increasingly favoured artists from non-western countries, or simply to further one's artistic experience with a scholarship in a Masters or Post-graduate programme at an international fine arts academy. The Third World is changing rapidly and for its artists this means that the possibilities are growing. In 1993 Peter Wollen, when referring to the increasing cultural contact wrote that "we are entitled to hope that in the visual arts, as elsewhere, we are entering an epoch in which invention and regeneration will come from the periphery, free from the self-obsession of the increasingly provincial culture of the metropolis."¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile it can be confirmed that the global art and exhibition market has turned towards certain so called "peripheries", China and then India being one such discovery. The increasing international interest in contemporary art from India has diverted some of this attention to its neighbour Pakistan; this latter attention can also be attributed to international politics since late 2001 having increasingly focused the international media's eyes on Muslim countries. Pakistan's alliance with the West in the "War against Terror" under its military General and President Pervez Musharraf and its resulting interior political struggle with Islamic conservative forces and their anti American/anti Western attitude has certainly added to the media interest in the country.

¹⁸⁰Peter Wollen, "Into the Future: Tourism, Language and Art", in: Art in Theory. 1900-2000. An Anthology of Changing Ideas, ed. By Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992, 2003), p. 1108. from: Raiding the Icebox. Reflections on Twentieth Century Culture, (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 190-212.

3.19 The 1990's: Development and Reconstruction

In Pakistan, after the Zia era, “the hopes for a return to democracy in the 1980s have worn a little thin in the 1990s,”¹⁸¹ as Salima Hashmi says. Karachi experienced sectarian violence due to the backlash of the Afghan War. Ethnic cleavages have ruptured processes of dialogue and evolution in Karachi, Pakistan’s only metropolis. “Artists, whose works during the 1980s were sardonic commentaries on the military regime, changed towards a more personal style.” Maybe more than any other decade, the 1990s, has burdened the artist in Pakistan with discussions concerning tradition and contemporaneity. While society is longing for democracy, remnants of those long periods of military dictatorship still influence life. State imposed taboos deliver the context for artists. Works by young artists comment on the socio-political situation, gender issues, Pakistan’s rapport with the West, and then on the “War against terror” in Afghanistan; on cultural issues, the past as well as on the present, popular culture, ethnic and religious conflicts, violence against women, on self, and on the impact of globalization in the country. It can be said that social and traditional structures were questioned in the 1970s and 80s and the echo is to be found in the works of art in the 1990s.

As if in tune with Ziauddin Sardar’s claim of “moving forward to tradition”¹⁸² and his claim that “tradition can actually transform non-western societies into cultures *of* resistance”¹⁸³ one is tempted to see the revival of the miniature department at the National College of Art in Lahore in this spirit. The renewed interest in a past that predates colonialism, the renewed interest in a local tradition as a reference to values takes place in an often claimed uninterrupted chain within the South Asian subcontinent and is - at the same time - very much in tune with a postmodern approach. But what has changed now in Pakistan is the approach towards tradition and culture demonstrated by the younger generation of artists who have no experience of colonialism and are no longer burdened with post-colonial discourse. The critique and revision of notions of history, whether national or more broadly cultural, was increasingly addressed in practice by artists internationally during the 1990s; be it artists living and working under liberal regimes of the West or artists living under direct political oppression. Art works and their programmatic approach during this time in Pakistan have

¹⁸¹Salima Hashmi, „A fractured whole: Pakistan, South Asia and the Triennial“, catalogue, Asia Pacific Triennale, Brisbane, 1999, N.pag.

¹⁸²As mentioned above, p. 60

¹⁸³Ziauddin Sardar, op.cit., p. 273.

been challenged by a renewed self confidence that has allowed artists, without feeling any guilt, to interconnect with foreign influences as much as the rich and varied local traditions and cultures, from the popular visual arts and cultures to the so-called 'high art'. Pakistan is a country living simultaneously deep in the past and in the future. It is this pluralistic situation inspiring young artists today. The following chapters on miniature painting, popular visual art and culture, and the whole coming into being of the contemporary art scene in Pakistan since the 1990s has to be viewed with this in mind.

4 Miniature Painting Rediscovered

4.1 Historical Background

The illumination and illustration of books and manuscripts goes back a long way in the traditions of the Indian Subcontinent. Illustrated books were commissioned by early Muslim invaders of the Subcontinent, particularly during the Sultanate period (c. 1200 to 1526) in a style imitative of contemporary Persian paintings. From an indigenous Hindu-Jain tradition, also referred to as “Western Indian style”, there are surviving manuscript paintings executed on palm-leaf folios and wooden covers of religious manuscripts from as early as the twelfth century.¹⁸⁴

The Mughal emperor Humayun (1508 – 1556), while seeking help in Shah Tahmasp’s Iran, provided the artistic foundation for what would revolutionize Indian painting styles. On his return to Kabul in 1549 he was joined by two master artists from Iran, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdul-Samad. On following Humayun to India they set up an imperial painting studio which was to produce some of the masterpieces of Indian painting. During the reign of his follower and son Akbar (r. 1556 – 1605) the arts witnessed the most extraordinary transformation, creating a specific Mughal style, where Persian, Central Asian, Indian, and European painting traditions were brought together.

Stories and romances, Persian classics, and translations of Sanskrit literature were all illustrated. The imperial artist studio Akbar established and initiated was further nurtured under his son and follower Jahangir (r.1605-1625). The outstanding achievement of his reign is the patronage of painting with a clear development toward Naturalism, in part inspired by European prints. This development further enabled artists to express themselves more freely. A new emphasis on portraits – which served as diplomatic instruments – is also to be found along with animal and flower paintings, the latter being a reflection of Jahangir’s curious interest in the natural world. His son and follower Shah Jahan (“King of the World”) (r. 1628 – 58) came to regulate court art with even more strictness than his predecessors. The official chronicle of Shah Jahan, the Padshahnama, thus remains one of the finest examples of history

¹⁸⁴See John Guy, Arts of India: 1550-1900, ed. John Guy and Deborah Swallow, (London: V & A Publication, 1990), p. 28.

painting, maintaining and controlling through artistic means the "...hierarchy and order of Shah Jahan's rule"¹⁸⁵.

During the eighteenth century, as the Mughal state went into decline, the Hill States of the Himalayas north of Rajasthan – the Pahari mountains - came into being. Although Rajasthani and Pahari artists adopted Mughal style from the seventeenth century their paintings can be distinguished by the use of colour, line, and theme. "Krishna worship and the worship of different aspects of the female personality, along with large trees that are rendered like exploding flowers"¹⁸⁶ is representative of Rajasthani and Pahari painting and distinguishes these clearly from Mughal painting with an often inherent emotional connotation.¹⁸⁷

The decline of royal power in the eighteenth century and the lack of patronage as well as the growing influence of the British all affected the court artists. Along with the British came European artists introducing oil paintings on canvas with a Western perspective. The weakening of the Mughal and Rajput powers was readily filled by the British officers of the East India Company who became the new patrons of the arts. What came to be known as "Company" painting reflected the taste and interest of the new British patrons. Encountering unusual flora and fauna, new and exotic people, the Indian artist was now trained to capture these images in a European style and palette, single point perspective and naturalistic shadings in watercolour and oil painting, the latter having made "the most important contribution of western art to colonial India,"¹⁸⁸ to use Partha Mitter's words. That this most important contribution also came to be the most contestable art form since its emergence in the late eighteenth century is being expressed by various art movements and individuals.¹⁸⁹ Along with the installation of western art schools in the nineteenth century as part of the colonizing project, there followed a rejection of western style and palette and a resurgence of tradition and pre-modern Indian painting techniques and forms.

¹⁸⁵Ebba Koch, *The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting*, *Kind of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle*, Milo Cleveland Beach, Ebba Koch, and Wheeler Thackston (London and Washington, D.C., 1997),

¹⁸⁶Simone Wille, *Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New*, Diplomarbeit, (Innsbruck, 2002), p. 73.

¹⁸⁷For further information on painting from the Pahari region see: Simone Wille, *ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 17.

¹⁸⁹Compare with what has been said about Ravi Varma, p. 28-29.

4.2 Neo-Traditionalism and Abanindranath Tagore

A very significant role in neo-traditionalist painting in India was played by a movement in early 1900 from Bengal, where painting was constructed on political lines and associated with the swadeshi, or homeland movement. While many of the works created between 1895 and 1925 showed a tendency to revive India's past, at the same time they emphasized a reaction against British colonial power.¹⁹⁰ Restoring national pride and heritage through the means of painting and reviving an authentic tradition in India became the artist's agenda and was inextricably linked to a wider nationalist discourse. Academic art naturally was associated with the colonial agenda therefore any revival of an indigenous artistic style had to be set apart from the British. Although Raja Ravi Varma (1848 – 1906) has to be mentioned as the first painter to restore local heritage it was nevertheless Abanindranath Tagore (1871 – 1951) who became a key player in consciously using tradition as an antidote to western oil painting. Despite his popularity Raja Ravi Varma's academic art was criticized for being too closely linked to "imperial triumphalism".¹⁹¹

Abanindranath chose the miniature format as "a hallmark of medieval Indian painting"¹⁹² and works such as Bhārat Mātā (Fig. 62) and The Final Moments of Shah Jahan (Fig. 63) are the earliest examples of a conscious use of traditional art in modern Indian art history. Bhārat Mātā was painted in c. 1905, following the first major nationalist unrest in October 1905 which led the Raj to partition Bengal. In the portrait of Mother India (Bhārat Mātā) the figure of the goddess emerges out of a pale grey-green background. She is suspended in space above lotuses in a yellowish-pink glow with a radiant blue halo that multiplies into two more layers of haloes. The painting is executed in watercolour and the new Bengal school technique of overlay washes was inspired by the Japanese artist Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958), who came to Calcutta in 1903. Where Taikan moistened the paper with liberal splashes of water, Abanindranath developed his own technique by dipping paper in water before painting on it.¹⁹³ Bhārat Mātā is personified as a Bengali lady holding four symbolic objects in the fashion of Hindu deities. Rather than being conventional the objects carry nationalist connotations resonating with food, clothing, secular knowledge, and spiritual knowledge. As

¹⁹⁰On the Bengali phase of neo-traditionalism see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

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¹⁹²Partha Mitter, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922, op.cit, p. 340.

¹⁹³See Ibidem., p. 291.

a source of inspiration “the artist had visualised Bankim’s celebrated nationalist poem, *Bande Mātaram*.”¹⁹⁴ Abanindranath’s ‘oriental art’ thus was based on a combination of techniques and styles, ranging from the miniature tradition to Chinese and Japanese ink and landscape painting. That his art also fused and adapted non-oriental art shall not be discussed here in detail but Art Nouveau styles and aspects of Victorian art with its treatment of human emotions became a *Leitmotiv* for Abanindranath’s artistic career. *The Final Moments of Shah Jahan*¹⁹⁵ (Fig. 63) is an example of Abanindranath’s early inspiration from miniature art. The painting is executed in 1903. The composition is dominated by the solidity of richly decorated pillars. Slightly off-centred to the left is a bed on which rests a male figure gazing towards a building in the far distance recognizable as the Taj Mahal. The veiled woman, sitting to the right of the bed and looking towards the reclined male figure, balances out the composition. This painting, executed in oil on wood, must also be seen as an exercise in the convention of the popular Victorian “history painting”. That the artist turned to Mughal art and its iconography is an example of early experimentation with form; something which would soon be interpreted and held up “as the norm of an Indianness”¹⁹⁶ in painting.

Another aspect of this development in Bengal: the *swadeshi* doctrine was never totally favourable toward Muslims but rather excluded them. Coomaraswamy even claimed Rajput art to be more Indian than the Mughal.¹⁹⁷ Abanindranath’s Mughal period was part of his ‘traditional’ approach. Yet, this also shows us the problematic involved. “*Shah Jahan* was a half-hearted modification of European linear perspective used to accommodate the Mughal idiom. The most noticeable ‘archaeology’ was the faithful rendering of Mughal *pietre dure*.”¹⁹⁸ While The Pioneer’s from Bengal contributed to Hindu nationalism Abdur Rahman Chughtai contributed to a growing Muslim cultural consciousness. The upsurge of the Muslims was a response to Hindu nationalism and coincided with the worldwide Pan-Islamic movement. Chughtai, in 1916, met Abanindranath in Calcutta and valued the experience. His subsequent development of a so-called ‘oriental style’ and the influence of Abanindranath becomes apparent when viewing an early work such as *Jahanara and the Taj* (Fig. 64) alongside *The*

¹⁹⁴Ibidem, p. 295.

¹⁹⁵At times this painting is also referred to as „The passing of Shah Jahan“ as in Ratnabali Chatterjee, *From the Karkhana to the Studio. Changing Social Roles of Patron and Artist in Bengal*, (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1990). I am using “The final Moments of Shah Jahan” as used in Partha Mitter’s books such as *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922*, op.cit.

¹⁹⁶Ratnabali Chatterjee, *From the Karkhana to the Studio. Changing Social Roles of Patron and Artist in Bengal*, (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1990), p. 109.

¹⁹⁷See Centenary, 26-7. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting*, (Oxford: 1916), in Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922*, op.cit, p.285.

¹⁹⁸Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850 – 1922*, op.cit, p. 288.

final Moments of Shah Jahan (Fig. 63). It is interesting to note that it seems right there that a battle over Mughal miniature paintings in assertion of artistic and cultural authenticity occurred. While Chughtai, as a Muslim, claimed his roots with Mughal and Persian art he felt that Abanindranath “lacked a genuine Muslim experience.”¹⁹⁹ The latter however – drawing upon Muslim classics as a source of inspiration all his life – claimed jokingly that as a Pirali Brahmin, it was he who could best imagine Mughal culture.²⁰⁰ Both of these tendencies in artistic style and ideology clearly show two things: the emerging indigenous (swadeshi) ideology of art and its alliance with Pan-Asianism on the one side, and the spirit of artists aligning with Pan-Islam on the other side. The pluralistic situation of the Bengal Renaissance, the gathering of intellectual, political, and cultural forces, must be seen as part of the larger independent movement and the rise of national and cultural self definition. Abanindranath’s search for a visual form and his conscious use of tradition to create a new style ought to be seen as personal rather than political motivation. Although his work Bhārat Mātā (Fig. 62) catapulted his reputation as the artist of the nationalist cause it needs to be pointed out that this and possibly The Final Moments of Shah Jahan (Fig. 63) are the only works carrying a political message. When the Bengal School in Santiniketan became dogmatic and synonymous with the independence movement Abanindranath felt the need to retreat from the overtly political aspects of art-making. Thus the school’s adherence to traditional – pre-modern - and vernacular forms of art making was to express a resistance to Western academic realism and Western aesthetics in general; so much so that it is this consciously traditional style developed by Abanindranath and pursued by his followers which turned into a nationalist cause.

4.3 K. G. Subramanyan (b.1924)

Another artist whose investigations of the modern and the traditional or the vernacular are an important source of inspiration for a number of contemporary south Asian artists is K. G. Subramanyan. His interest in the living crafts of the country went beyond the sheer technicality of making craft or vernacular art. Subramanyan investigated the whole ideology of the craft, from its perception to its practice within its community. Subramanyan’s use of

¹⁹⁹Ibidem, p. 336.

²⁰⁰Ibidem., p. 336. P. Mitter explains that the Pirali Tagores were stigmatised by the orthodox for taking employment under Muslims.

and relationship to the past should not though be seen as a stance against modernism or as a peacemaker with the past. Tradition, for Subramanyan, offered the possibility to create a personal language that was both rooted in the here and now and in the past hence offered freedom to move back and forth. His theoretical understanding of craft as practice, as a systematized process leads to the understanding that art is language.²⁰¹

For the artist Shahzia Sikander, (referred to in detail later) the living and multi-vocal vision of tradition by Subramanyan was influential when she was a student at Lahore's NCA around 1990. Sikander, in numerous conversations, has made it clear that for her the choice of working with the traditional Persian and Indian miniature painting was less about creating the familiar but the personal²⁰² - an aspect that Subramanyan continually emphasized when talking about his own art making.

4.4 Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894-1975)

The list of artists having turned to the miniature painting tradition to develop a unique style of painting is long. Abdur Rahman Chughtai, as mentioned above, is often seen as the father of modern art in Pakistan and his influence on the development of miniature painting in Pakistan is important. Chughtai illustrated themes from Persian and Urdu poetry but he also painted motifs of Hindu and Buddhist background. His strong affiliation to the local Punjabi tradition is seen in works such as the romance of Ranja and Heer. Radha Krishna (Fig. 11)²⁰³, painted in the 1930s, is an excellent example of how the artist applied, in a very personal way, a number of styles, ranging from Kangra miniature painting to stylist forms of ornamentation and affiliations to Art Nouveau. Geometric design and floral patterns – an inherent part of the Muslim visual culture - are in fact very compatible with Art Nouveau, the latter most likely being taught at the British-run Mayo School of Arts in Lahore.²⁰⁴ Although the stylization of the two figures and the flatness of the architectural setting have to be compared with Art Nouveau and its variations of the ornament in the West, we will also be confronted with the

²⁰¹See: Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism. Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p. 87.

²⁰²From personal interviews with Shahzia Sikander between 2000 and 2007.

²⁰³See chapter 4, page 4.

²⁰⁴Later to be renamed the National College of Arts (NCA).

reference that this picture language derives from a calligraphic tradition. From Marcella Nesom Sirhandi we learn that Chughtai did in fact learn calligraphy in Lahore²⁰⁵

4.5 Baroda and the many masks of Indian traditions

The nationalist art movement described earlier, which developed in Bengal during the early part of the twentieth century brought about a 'traditional' or so-called Indian style that came to be used all over India. Gujarat and the city of Baroda offer an extensive variety and tradition, even though most of modern Baroda was built in the nineteenth century during the reign of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1881-1939). With derivations and mutations, the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, established in 1950, had its own *indigenist* movement. The foundation of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Baroda represented within the history of Indian arts institutions a special case in that it was detached from the pedagogy/educational theory of colonial art schools and from the cultural nationalism of Santiniketan. In Baroda, the task was to revolve around slavish imitation of the West and the nationalistic fawning of past styles.²⁰⁶ Without suffering, artists in Baroda could draw on a variety of sources and a number of artists/teachers contributed to this dominant art trend, of which some will be referred to in this paper. The presence of a rich figure like K. G. Subramanyan – a product of Santiniketan - aided to this a lot. In his capacity as artist, art educator, art writer he questioned the common duality of theory and praxis, art and craft, as well as the boundaries of the public and the private.

In the 1960s Baroda became a focal point for a new Indian art. The city even gave its name to a whole generation of painters – the Baroda School – including G.M. Sheikh, Nalini Malani, Bhupen Khakhar, and Sudhir Patwardhan, to name but a few. The work of this group of artists, painting in a figurative style and using a narrative form, can be described by the words of the British painter Timothy Hyman, who wrote a monograph on Khakhar. This group, he claimed is "highly aware of avant-garde debate, and is influenced – among other things – by

²⁰⁵ Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1992), p.24.

²⁰⁶ See Nilima Sheikh, "A Post-Independence Initiative in Art", in Gulammohammed Sheikh, *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997), p. 55.

Mediaeval illuminated manuscripts, the Sienna school, Brueghel, Bonnard, Kitay and, above all, the whole revised Indian tradition.”²⁰⁷ M.S. Baroda also offered art history courses, and the philosophy of art and cultural history in Baroda were developed into world art history and aesthetics, contrary to the prevailing Eurocentric teaching of art history in the sixties²⁰⁸.

Generations of Indian artists again and again were confronted with the reproach of eclecticism. With the establishment of the Group 1890 under its leader Jagdish Swaminathan (1928-1994) Indian art saw for the first time the claim that “indigenism...has to be put ...on an anti-imperialist platform”²⁰⁹, which would question “the technocratic, incipiently authoritarian culture of the west.”²¹⁰ This group consisted of twelve artists, including Gulammohammed Sheikh, Jeram Patel, and Jyoti Bhatt. The position of the group soon became the foundation for an identity for the followers of the narrative school of Baroda. In 1981 the directional exhibition Place for People and the active people around this show created a critical space for the description of private and contemporary history within a narrative frame. The show threw up questions of aesthetic and political representation. The shift toward the figurative was seen as a radical programme to democratise art and to give the ideology of the avant-garde a new definition from a post-colonial perspective. The works of the narrative artists of the Baroda school is of art historical and cultural interest rather than of any political nature. In the history of modern Indian art, since the Bombay Progressives²¹¹ the depiction of cityscape and urban scenery was rarely the case. The significance of people in the exhibition Place for People was on urban and half-urban spaces and on the public inhabiting such spaces. However, what distinguished the internationalism of the Baroda school from earlier such claims like those of the Bombay Progressives was its timely parallel to an avant-garde movement developing out of Great Britain. The British Pop Art gained power against the dominance of Conceptual Art and high modern abstraction by reviving the figurative, thereby claiming this as the only way to denote the hierarchy of the modern between high art and popular art. David Hockney and R. B. Kitaj quoted images from public spaces from which contemporary stories could have been told. At the same time the figurative style of painting in Baroda was justified in the name of the people. In Baroda, artists came to

²⁰⁷Timothy Hyman, “The Baroda School and Bhupen Khakhar”, in Art International, (Paris: Spring 1990), p. 60.

²⁰⁸Even today, non-European art is restricted to specialized studies at European Universities.

²⁰⁹Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “The last decade”, in Contemporary Art in Baroda, (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997), p. 215.

²¹⁰Geeta Kapur, “Introduction”, in: Contemporary Indian Art, (London/New Delhi: Royal Academy of Arts and Festival of India, 1982), in *Ibidem*, p. 215

²¹¹To this 1947 established group in Bombay belonged artists such as, F.N. Souza, S.H. Raza, and M.F. Husain. Its members did not share the same ideology, and neither did they share an identical art praxis. But they offered a “formalistic manifest” which helped the first generation of artists in independent India to position themselves internationally.

question, “from their own historical vantage point”²¹² as Geeta Kapur calls it, Modernism as a western invention.

Returning to the earlier years at Baroda, the 1950s, Jyoti Bhatt’s Krishnaleela (Fig.65) (1954) is an excellent example of how traditional resources came to be re-applied and re-organized in Baroda prior to the establishment of the new Faculty. The panel was a student project for a mural design and Jyoti Bhatt won the President’s Gold Plaque in 1956 for this work.²¹³ Krishna Leela refers to the God’s cosmic play and pleasure when he spent time on earth as a simple cow-herd and seduced the local cow-girls or Gopis. Bhatt makes use of a variety of traditional painterly as well as linguistic techniques and sources. Foliage and water are rendered in a technique that is borrowed from the miniature tradition. The flattened space within which figures and objects appear with non-perspectival proportions are Indian indeed, for Mughal miniature paintings developed some degree of perspective. The reader, or viewer of the panel, has to follow a lateral way of reading the legend, due, of course, to the contemporary format of the cloth.

Other artists such as Vinay Trivedi were commissioned to illustrate new editions of the Ramayana, published by the Oriental Institute at Baroda.²¹⁴ Keeping with the concern of this thesis in tracing the art history of the miniature painting tradition, I would also like to mention here the work of Bihari Barbhaiya whose work, as Sheikh mentions, “is routed more directly from Santiniketan”²¹⁵. While all these works dating from the 1950s show the prevalent climate at the Fine Arts Faculty at Baroda, they also indicate the cultural matrix of India, its rich traditional and historical resources and how much artists could dig into this great variety on offer,²¹⁶ somewhat in contrast to Pakistan, where the new nation had to struggle to strike roots with a past that had yet to be defined.

²¹²Geeta Kapur, “Bhupen Kharkhar”, in Bhupen Kharkhar, exhibition catalogue, (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2002), p. 26.

²¹³Nilima Sheikh, “A Post-Independence Initiative in Art”, in, Contemporary Art in Baroda, (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997), p. 83.

²¹⁴Ibidem., p. 85.

²¹⁵Ibidem., p. 85.

²¹⁶Just as Western artists in the early years of the 20th century dug into the great varieties on offer from an invaded and colonized world.

4.6 Gulammohammed Sheikh (b. 1937)

In Baroda meanwhile Gulammohammed Sheikh, after returning from a student fellowship in London between 1963 and 1966, developed an iconography full of social and personal concerns. The imagery in these works, executed in warm and luminous colours, was very much inspired by his visits to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where he had a chance to study Indian and Persian paintings. He discovered that the lack of a fixed linear perspective – as in Mughal paintings – or the bright colours offered in Rajput paintings are much more related to the local Indian environment²¹⁷ than he had been exposed to during his early years in art school.

Returning Home After Long Absence (Fig.66) was painted in 1969 and repainted in 1973²¹⁸ and represents the artist's early observations. A high courtyard wall separates a town with a blue mosque within the wall, from a factory outside the wall in the far distance. Right in the forefront, centred, is "a portrait of the artist's mother, taken from a photograph."²¹⁹ Vertically above the scene, suspended, flies the Prophet Muhammad, veiled and with a bright halo, seated on his mythical winged horse Buraq with a human head. Right behind the Prophet, as if preceding him, the painting is crowded with Angels, descending towards the town. Traditionally, these angels surround the prophet of Islam carrying lamps and gifts to illuminate and accompany the divine passage. Within the seemingly sleepy or uninhibited town grow a number of trees, one of which is being inhabited by the flying Angels. The Prophet and his Buraq as well as the Angels derive from Persian miniature paintings of the sixteenth century – hence a Safavid Persian influence. Trees are reminiscent of Mughal miniature paintings but can also be traced back to Indian miniature paintings of the Pahari region. Sheikh, while in Europe, also developed a special interest for medieval paintings, especially those of Siena and the singular works of Piero della Francesca.²²⁰ By avoiding colourful details as well as avoiding crowding the space in the town with hipped-roof houses, Gulammohammed Sheikh might be seen as to have been inspired by fifteenth century works of Piero della Francesca. Ebba Koch has pointed out that the architectural details in this

²¹⁷Ajay J. Sinha, "Envisioning The Seventies And The Eighties", in Contemporary Art in Baroda, (New Delhi: Tulike, 1997), p. 162

²¹⁸Ibidem., p. 163

²¹⁹Ibidem., p. 163

²²⁰Suman Gopinath, "Gespräch mit Gullammohammed Sheikh", in Horn Please, exhibition catalogue, Kunstmuseum Bern, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2007), p. 48

particular painting look very much inspired by a 1631 painting of Asaf Khan, painted by Bichitr (1615-50), at the Victoria and Albert Museum.²²¹

Coming back to the title of the painting Returning Home After a Long Absence the artist obviously connects the public with the private. His long absence, his coming home, his re-discovery of his home-land with its varieties of cultures, elements of travel, present and past, real and imaginary are all to be found within this work. Sheikh's art involves the act of telling stories in which he succeeds to involve the present while retaining a relationship with the past and its traditions. For Sheikh, moving "among several cultures and times"²²² is not seen or treated as baggage. Quite the contrary, it offers opportunities to move across space and time. In Revolving Routes (Fig 67) from 1981 the artist combines elements mentioned earlier: autobiography and travel, travel into the past and into the future, contemporary and imaginary. Slightly outcentred, towards the upper left hand quarter of the painting, a self portrait can be seen as a central figure which is surrounded by four squares. The upper left part shows the place the artist grew up, below that one an angel swoops down towards an open green occupied by a mythical speaking tree – representing the varieties of cultures of India. This tree is inhabited by portraits of the artist's teachers and friends. The square to the lower right is filled with images and memories of the institution Sheikh has been part of. To the upper right we see the artist's Baroda residence. The way the painting is being schematically arranged in to four parts can be referred to the Chahar Bagh – a famous feature of classical garden plans in Islam. Chahar Bagh in Farsi means four gardens and in its often used abbreviated form Charhbagh in Urdu it means the same thing. Chahar translates into four and Bagh translates into Garden. "The classic version of the 'Chahar Bagh' has a fountain at the centre of the garden which flows into four water channels at right angles to each other. Other water channels flow round the outside of the garden to link these up. Thus the garden is divided into four by water channels, hence 'Four Gardens'. Some famous examples of the 'Chahar Bagh' layout are the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain, the Garden of Fin, Kashan, Iran and the Taj Mahal garden in Agra, India."²²³

²²¹ I am grateful to Ebba Koch to have made this comment to me on 25th June, 2010.

²²² Title of a lecture delivered by Sheikh at the Smithsonian Institution, New York, 1985. Published under the same title in Carla Borden (ed.), Contemporary Indian Tradition, (New York: The Smithsonian Institution, 1989).

²²³ The 'Chahar Bagh' plan – Islamic Garden Design Resource, from: <http://www.reep.org/resources/islamic-gardens/design-chaharbagh.php>, 17.11.2010. See also: Ebba Koch, The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), p. 24-5. See also: David Stronach, "The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium B.C.", *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s., 4 (1990): 171-80.

Sheikh's art intends to re-create the world by narrating experience using a variety of forms within a frame. While quoting from various sources becomes one of his 'Leitmotifs' he continually works on opening up possibilities to enter his narratives simultaneously from various gateways. Aspects of simultaneity and the mastering of various narratives is what concerns this artist and in this way he re-looked at the 2nd century mural paintings in Ajanta or the paintings from Rajasthan and Padhani.²²⁴ While in the caves at Ajanta several narratives are being told on a wall without subdivisions, the paintings from Rajasthan recount several narratives within a single narrative and within a frame – a boundary - simultaneously. “My interest about these forms,” Sheikh recounts, “led to experimenting with a diversity of representations without a linear succession yet with an inherent system holding everything together.”²²⁵ Working within a frame, as an artist does on his canvases, on mixed media, and recently on digital collages, Sheikh constantly challenges this task of creating open stories, where the observer is free to enter the narrative at any given point and the represented main protagonist of the painting can simultaneously be part of all narratives. As in Revolving Routes (Fig. 67), the main character, slightly elevated above the centre, is by different colour shades and form related to the four scenes and in that sense the connecting element – yet not the starting point. Simultaneity of time and space is a coherent factor in Sheikh's work and within that formula he is able to investigate aspects of the private/ the autobiographical, and the public, the past and the present; the geographical here and there.

“Living in India means living simultaneously in several cultures and times. One often walks into “medieval situations”, and runs into “primitive” people. The past exists as a living entity alongside the present, each illuminating and sustaining the other. As times and cultures converge, the citadels of purism explode. Traditional and modern, private and public, the inside and outside continually telescope and reunite. The kaleidoscopic flux of images engages me to construe structures in the process of being created. Like the many-eyed and many armed archetype of an Indian child, soiled with multiple visions, I draw my energy from the source.”²²⁶

²²⁴Gulammohammed Sheikh in an interview with Sumon Gopinath, in Horn Please. Erzählen in der zeitgenössischen indischen Kunst, (Kunstmuseum Bern: Hatje Cantz, 2007), p. 47. translated from German Simone Wille

²²⁵Ibidem., p. 47

²²⁶Statement by Gulammohammed Sheikh, exhibition catalogue, Place for People, (Bombay and New Delhi: 1981),

G. M. Sheikh's concerns are at some stage similar to those of Zahoor ul Akhlaq who also came to discover the value of the Persian and Indian miniature tradition with its lack of a fixed perspective and its particular framing concept while studying in London and having the chance to view originals at the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Yet their artistic productions are far apart from each other. The narrative becomes a primary preoccupation for Sheikh along with a simultaneity that the many living cultures in India offered on a daily basis. In comparison to this Zahoor ul Akhlaq's engagement with his own culture can be seen as a conceptualisation and contextualisation rather than a narrativisation. In this way Akhlaq's approach is rooted within Modernism where Sheikh's approach is clearly post-modern.

4.7 Bhupen Khakhar (1934 – 2003)

Bhupen Khakhar, like Gulammohammed Sheikh, used traditional Indian miniatures as one point of reference amongst many. Like Sheikh, he delved into the exploration of the narrative possibilities of depicting a number of scenes and figures simultaneously. Khakhar's entry into the art scene in the mid- 1960's coincided with the 'crisis' within modernist art at around the same time. Consequently, eclecticism and plurality in style, the foregrounding of other cultures, the emergence of new forms of art, deconstructed a one-dimensional (western) internationalism and paved the way for the beginning of a multivalent understanding of modernity itself. Postmodernism opened the way to many possibilities including minority discourse as well as marginalised areas of culture such as the popular.

Khakhar made use of a variety of popular visual cultures. He referred to British pop art as well as to colonial ethnography, where locals were portrayed as objects and hence classified according to their trade. His "extensive archive of popular culture"²²⁷ was extended by miniature paintings. In Portrait of Shri Shankerbhai V. Patel Near Red Fort (Fig.68), 1971, elements from the visual popular and high culture meet in a seeming confrontation, thereby questioning prevalent myths about nationalism and international modernism. Khakhar himself notes, in a catalogue of 1972:

²²⁷Ajay J. Sinha, "Envisioning the Seventies and the eighties", in Contemporary Art in Baroda, op. cit, p. 167.

Red Fort and Blue Sky as stated above is from picture postcard of Delhi.

Small trees in front of red fort – from Henri Rousseau's painting.

Big tree on the right – from Indian miniatures,

Portrait – from actual portrait study in charcoal.²²⁸

The act of appropriating for Khakhar is not hidden; on the contrary he makes it perfectly clear by his statement. The table, set slightly out of line on the carpet, decorated with fruit and thus conjuring up a still-life in a faux-naïf style can be read as mockery and masquerade at high art; more than an invitational gesture to have a break and relax on this carpet by this table in the park. The only figure in this setting, Shankerbhai, executed in charcoal, seems to be the contemporary link to this assemblage of historical reproductions or appropriations - as if commemorating or rather mocking art history.

Following this Khakhar began what he called the 'trade' series, depicting the world as the common man lives it. There, the influence of the Company School comes to be acknowledged. Company School paintings were made in the late 18th and 19th Century, often in series, for East India Company officers and consisted of stereotypical subjects such as the variety of Indian ethnicities as well as their religious types. Company paintings were executed in watercolour instead of gouache and applied linear perspective and shading. In the early phase of Company painting, in the late 18th Century, only a few patrons provided work for trained artists. By the beginning of the 19th Century, enterprising Indian artists created sets of standard popular subjects for sale to any tourist passing through. Such sets consisted of unusual flora and fauna, of famous monuments, festivals, small-time professionals, or the many varieties of costumes of the subcontinent.

“Just as a depiction of the lowly members in the social hierarchy gave the Company School paintings a documentary value, Khakhar, following the naïvely 'naturalistic' tradition of the historical style, provided himself with a language, with a parity in skills and, analogically and pictorially, a kind of comradeship, an unsung brotherhood, of common men”,²²⁹ Geeta Kapur points out, referring to paintings such as Janata Watch Repairing (Fig. 69) (1972), amongst others. The artist displays the shop's inventory and as such they “glow like facets on the dials

²²⁸Bhupen Khakhar as quoted in Ajay J. Sinha, *Ibidem.*, p. 167.

²²⁹Geeta Kapur, “Bhupen Khakhar”, in Bhupen Khakhar, exhibition catalogue, (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2002), p. 30

of large watches painted on either side of the figure”.²³⁰ Monotony and timelessness are emphasized by details such as the still fan, the watches on the back wall showing all identical time.

In later works, dating from the mid to late 1970s and into the 1980s, Khakhar constructed paintings less about a single subject and more about everyday life in provincial cities. In The Celebration of Guru Jayanti (Fig. 70) (1980) we see people going about their daily chores. Geeta Kapur suggests that inspiration for these “long-distance panoramic views” with “the diminutive scale of people going about their daily chores” may have come from Khakhar’s travels to Europe in late 1970s where he was delighted at studying original works by Brueghel.²³¹ Here, narrative elements, references to classical Western art, as well as the sacred and the secular world are among the varied sources with which Khakhar began to expand his pictorial vocabulary. In Man with Bouquet of Plastic Flowers (Fig.71) (1976) the central figure is flanked by other small scenes. For Enrique Juncosa this “composition clearly recall Russian or Byzantine icons and Italian Primitive art”, where “the saint is surrounded by his miracles”²³² and Timothy Hyman finds echoes of traditional Indian posters that portray gurus surrounded by the highlights of their life.²³³

4.8 Francesco Clemente (b. 1952)

At that time, while travelling abroad, Khakhar also came into contact with the dynamic London art scene. He met artists like David Hockney whose works he greatly admired.²³⁴ The renewed interest in painting was apparent in Europe at that time and artists such as Francesco Clemente travelled to India and found inspiration in its mystical heritage and its many contemporary arts. Clemente, whose works are pure inventions of new significances, saw the very potential offered by “...movie billboards, statuary and relics, souvenir books sold at

²³⁰ Ajay J. Sinha, “Envisioning the Seventies and the eighties”, in Contemporary Art in Baroda, op. cit, p. 168.

²³¹ Geeta Kapur, “Bhupen Khakhar”, in Bhupen Khakhar, exhibition catalogue, op.cit. pp. 30-32.

²³² Enrique Juncosa, “The integrative art of Bhupen Khakhar”, in Bhupen Khakhar, exhibition catalogue, (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2002), p. 12.

²³³ Timothy Hyman, Bhupen Khakhar, (Bombay: Chemould Publications and Arts, 1998), pp. 48-49.

²³⁴ Enrique Juncosa, op. cit., p. 18.

temples and shrines as well and Hindu comic books.”²³⁵ Clemente was also fascinated by antiquity, which then offered something like a world culture, branching out through the then civilized world without being a comprehensible whole.²³⁶ “You could find Egyptian people painting Greek pictures, Greeks singing Latin songs, and Latins praying to Eastern gods.”²³⁷ In India, Clemente had also found “great stimulation in collaborating with local artisans and craftspeople on the making of his art.”²³⁸ This idea of collaborating with local craftspeople can be traced back to Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994)²³⁹, an Italian conceptual artist who was also considered a member of the art movement “arte povera”. Boetti had often collaborated with other people, both artists and non-artists. Better known works of this collaboration types are Ordine e Disordine (“Order and Disorder” or “Order is Disorder”) and a variety of similar truisms and wordplays. These works were created together with artisan embroiderers in Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Initially he provided them with the designs but later on he gave them total freedom by letting them select and combine the colours and thus deciding the final look of the work. Large embroidered maps of the world are perhaps the best known works of his collaboration with Afghani and Pakistani crafts-people. Mappa del Mondo (Map of the World) (Fig. 72) (1989) delineate the political boundaries of the country. Countries are represented by their flags instead of boundaries and the whole as such is projected against a blue background. Note that some countries such as Israel are not represented – due to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan not recognizing their existence.

At around 1980, the art critic Achille Bonito Oliva grouped Italian figurative painters such as Sandro Chia, Enzo Cucchi, and Mimmo Paladino under the banner of Transavantguardia. These painters practiced what Clemente perhaps best practiced in his nomadic lifestyle, a transcultural art that Bonito Oliva described with the following words:

“Every work becomes a vicissitude carrying and returning to the place of work, crossing multiple fields of reference, using every utensil...allowing the work’s fragments to maintain a mobile relationship which is never bolted and never seeks shelter in the idea of unity...Today, making art means having everything on the table

²³⁵Clemente, quoted in Raymond Foye, “Madras” in Ann Percy and Foye, Francesco Clemente: Three Worlds, exh. Cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1990) p. 51.

²³⁶Lucius Grisebach, “Keep on the surface – don’t look for meaning”, in Francesco Clemente im Gespräch mit Rainer Crone und Georgia Marsh, in: Kunst heute, Nr. 5, Hsg. Von Wilfried Dickhoff, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1990, p. 41.

²³⁷Francesco Clemente, in ibidem. P. 41.

²³⁸Lisa Dennison, “Francesco Clemente: Once You Begin the Journey You Never Return”, in: Clemente, exhibition catalogue, (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1999), p. 27.

²³⁹The artist later renamed himself as a dual persona Alighiero e Boetti

in a revolving and synchronous simultaneity which succeeds in blending inside the crucible of the work both private and mythic images, personal signs tied to the individual's story and public signs tied to culture and art history.”²⁴⁰

Many of Clemente's generation thrive on quotation from past art. Gulammohammed Sheikh and Bhupen Khakhar in India, to name but a couple, referenced medieval Italian painters, Russian or Byzantine icons, and Post-Impressionist painters such as Henri Rousseau, painting in a naïve or primitive manner, as much as the varied Indian traditions, be they referred to as high art, low art or street art respectively. Clemente, Sandro Chia, Julian Schnabel, are just a few artists from the West who embarked on a painterly mission with the intention to reference the past because “style” as such took on a subordinate role and therefore all forms of style were simultaneously available as well as mutually interchangeable.

Yet, of course, artistic intentions differ in so far as Clemente uses his figurative paintings for non-narrative purpose – contrary to the Baroda painters mentioned earlier who consciously painted in a narrative style and were engaged in exploring the various possibilities of painting different narratives. Clementes paintings don't deliver descriptions of a situation or a story, quite the contrary, he tries to confuse common notion of the spectator about the idea of reality.²⁴¹ Italy, within Europe's 1970s, occupies a special role for the art of “arte povera” which grew out of the spirit of the 1960s does not loose its urgency and younger Italian artists engage with its premise. It is also due to this influence that these younger Italian artists deal easily with poetic metaphor, the notion for tradition and for the historical. In general it can be said that the turning towards figurative painting full of meaning as it occurred in the 1970s in many countries in Europe undoubtedly has to do with a change in mentality.

In 1980 and 1981 Francesco Clemente collaborated with miniature painting workshops in Jaipur and Orissa. Twelve gouaches from Francesco Clemente Pinxit (Fig. 73-84) (1980-81) show how the artist engaged with the tradition of miniature painting in his own, contemporary way. It is quite possible that Clemente did not actually lay a hand on the gouaches but rather, as mentioned by Raymond Foye, “verbally describe the image to the artisans in the workshop.”²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Achille Bonito Oliva, “The Italian Trans-Avantgarde”, Flash Art, nos. 92-93 (Nov. 1979), p. 18.

²⁴¹ Francesco Clemente in Gespräch mit Rainer Crone und Georgia Marsh, in: Kunst heute, Nr. 5, Hsg. Von Wilfried Dickhoff, (n.p. Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1990), p.16

²⁴² Raymond Foye, “Books, Palimpsests, Collaborations”, in Clemente, exhibition catalogue, (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1999), p. 402.

Since I will later, in detail, write about how students at the miniature department at Lahore's National College of Arts meticulously learn the ancient and 'authentic' technique and practice of this Mughal art practice it is necessary to make clear at this point that the miniature painter workshops at Jaipur work quite differently. "The Indian tourist miniatures that are mass produced by artisans (who) use tea-stained and yellowed paper, or pages of Urdu and Persian books, as a medium to apply scenes reminiscent to the Mughal or Indian court paintings. Bits and pieces of script at the edges will confirm the potential buyer of its authenticity and antiquity."²⁴³

This however, was not important for Clemente, because his interest and intention lay entirely in collaboration which by that he meant "expanding his own thought" so as to avoid "the notions of fixed identity that are denoted by a "signature" style."²⁴⁴ For the Francesco Clemente Pinxit gouaches the miniature painters stuck to the format of the traditional miniature painting – a frame within a frame: a framed image surrounded by a wide border. The Mughal or Indian court scenes are replaced by a new world, a contemporary world invented by Francesco Clemente and executed by the miniature painters from the Jaipur workshops. Fig. 73 is the so-called first page of these paintings and carries the title Francesco Clemente Pinxit in Latin, referring to the artistic practice of collaborating that stretches back thousands of years to Greek and Roman times. The title can be ironic too, as the identity of the painters who really executed the work remains anonymous. Therefore, Clemente is the orchestrator of the process, delegating work to a workshop situation, where a single artist's signature has never really had much value. The title page features traditional tile work, architectonic devices, and floral decoration that would traditionally be applied to the borders. Yet, the entire painting is constructed of borders within borders pointing towards the quantity of pages to come. The diagonal black beam decorated with flowers and breaking out of the upper third part of the composition interrupts this layering mechanism of the borders or pages. The following eleven pages depict a bizarre and obscure world, full of painterly narratives. Clemente's obsession with the human body stretches through his oeuvre and in Francesco Clemente Pinxit this can be read as a metaphor for human creativity where, through the collaboration process, his personal thought expands through the thought and view of another person. In Fig. 74 we see six bodies, partly amputated, dispersed over a tiled or

²⁴³Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, thesis, (Innsbruck: August, 2002), p. 84

²⁴⁴Raymond Foye, op. cit., p. 392.

ornamented plane. Rather than seeing these figures enacting physical exercise, I would suggest we could read this first page as a sampling of human postures, a preliminary instruction for the workshop painters on how to proceed onto the following pages. On all of these twelve pages, traditional aspects of the Mughal and Indian miniature painting tradition are retained, be it floral design, the grammar of ornament, or landscape devices. Yet, these traditional elements are deconstructed in such a way that together with the contemporary input they delve into an *old-new* mystic world. Raymond Foye considers these gouaches depict “a world in which all things in creation are animated, enmeshed in a web of private metaphors.” He further refers to this creation as “fablelike” and compares it in parts with a “Bosch-like enterprise”.²⁴⁵ Creation and continuity are inherent factors as much as the act of collaboration, which is only possible through verbal description and the act of listening. Fig. 79 is set in an Indian landscape with rock formation, reminiscent of the Persian miniature tradition. The walled city building up on the horizon is rather 14th Century Italian or even “Sienese of the 14th Century”.²⁴⁶ The protagonists, the two male figures, are parading the two activities inherent to the act of collaboration: the male figure in the forefront of the painting holds his left hand to the ear as if listening to the speaking fishes whilst the male figure in the background, standing, is proclaiming aloud through a trombone. While the acts of listening and speaking are performed in a very obvious way in this single painting and may be less obvious in others, the act of creation and continuity is nicely presented in Fig. 80.

Summing up, these twelve gouaches, making up Francesco Clemente Pinxit, depict nicely how a traditional medium can be deconstructed and re-assembled anew in a contemporary way. Yet, for Francesco Clemente the interest may have never been one of re-newing the Indian tradition but seeking inspiration through the act of collaboration. The fluidity of this multi-linguistic outcome (not cross-cultural outcome) is very much in tune with Clemente’s postmodernist approach. That this approach avoided strategies of appropriation such as the juxtaposing of different styles and images²⁴⁷ has to be emphasized. His engagement and collaboration with artisans in India and his “method of synthesizing images into an extremely personal mythology”²⁴⁸ distinguishes him from contemporaries in the United States and in Europe. Clemente’s work in the 1980s - using traditional medium, references to various historical and cultural reminiscences and a tendency to fragmentation - was integrated into the

²⁴⁵Raymond Foye, op. cit., p. 402.

²⁴⁶Ibidem., p. 402

²⁴⁷See: Lisa Dennison, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁴⁸Lisa Dennison, op. cit., p. 33.

framework of the Neo-Expressionists. Yet, while his Italian contemporaries of the Transavantguardia were deeply rooted in a national-historical past Francesco Clemente went a step further and sought inspiration in another culture. That this venture has been interpreted many times as an act of hijacking can be linked to what has become a common act for artists from the West since Gauguin's journeys to the Tahiti.

4.9 Primitivism and art historical styles

Clemente obviously engages with the phenomena of primitivism in a contemporary way. Yet, his use and re-construction of exotic images through collaborations with the many visual cultures in India – the painter of miniatures and local craftspeople such as billboard sign painters and tinsmiths – demonstrated for Clemente how making use of high or low culture was not a simple act of appropriation but was instead led by the idea of an actual engagement with the culture through the collaborative process.

From a South Asian perspective, artists such as Gulammohammed Sheikh and Bhupen Khakhar took positions against a modernist hegemony and the position of *alterity* came “to provide the key to a multivalent understanding of modernity itself.”²⁴⁹ Against the prevalent rebuke that modern Indian art is nothing else but a derivation of western modernity, the narrative artists of the Baroda school played with the critics by referring to modernity itself as being nothing else but eclectic and, at the same time, re-assessed the position of representatives of Modernity like Chagall, Picasso, Matisse and Klee from a post-colonial and Third World perspective.²⁵⁰

By connecting and narrating the personal and the public, the autobiographical and the social, the individual and the collective, the radicality of the works of these narrative painters from the Baroda school is based upon the concentrated focus of urban and half urban places/spaces and on the public, inhabiting such places/spaces. In these images the allegorical and the historical interweave, art historical styles of the past and styles of the popular culture form a dialogue. References to the various miniature painting schools has to be seen as part of a

²⁴⁹Geeta Kapur, “Bhupen Khakhar”, in Bhupen Khakhar, exhibition catalogue, op.cit., p. 26.

²⁵⁰See also: Parul Dave, “Bitte hupen”, in: Horn Please, Erzählen in der zeitgenössischen indischen Kunst, op. cit., p. 29.

larger concern with tradition in a post-colonial sense; that of coming to terms with one's own past in order to look ahead. It also has to do with what Gulammohammed Sheikh said about living in India with its multiple cultures and times, its living past, interfering and interweaving with the present.²⁵¹

Gulammohammed Sheikh's interest in miniature painting is very specific but also has to be seen within his larger notion of visuality which includes a number of traditions such as Ajanta cave paintings of the 2nd Century, pre-Renaissance Europe, as well as folk and popular painting in India. Sheikh's investigation of the miniature traditions goes beyond formal devices and delves into the mindset of patron and artist who together created a new tenor of times, actively shaping history.²⁵² For Sheikh, the concept of the miniature primarily served as a tool in which he found a visual structure for his narrativisation of time and space. Sheikh's passion is for the art of the world as much as their histories.

For Khakhar the miniature painting tradition belonged to a variety of visual heritage and historical style from which he drew inspiration to create a language to pay tribute to the common man.

4.10 Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945)

Nilima Sheikh's engagement with tradition and history goes back to the late 1960s, when she entered the art world and learned from K. G. Subramanyan in Baroda about the plurality of art practice, of craft, and folk practice; an un-hierarchical art of interweaving and different surfaces, forms and systems of painting. Nilima Sheikh looked at Asian painting traditions, discovering that there were alternative ways of reading traditional paintings. The artists introduction to and interest in traditional miniature painting was thus not centered on learning the technique so much as exploring its idiom.²⁵³ Nilima Sheikh did go to places like Jaipur,

²⁵¹See reference 39, p. 11.

²⁵²See: Gulammohammed Sheikh, "Making of a Visual Language: Thoughts on Mughal Painting", in: Indian Art: Forms, Concerns and Development in Historical Perspicive, Vo. VI, Part 3, ed. B.N. Goswamy, (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000).

²⁵³See: Nilima Sheikh in an interview with Vishakha N. Desai, in: Conversations with Traditions. Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander, exhibition catalogue, (New York: Asia Society, 2001), p.65.

where she could collect material and know-how on traditional painting techniques. Other places of interest were Nathadwara, a center for pichhvai paintings, a form of traditional tempera painting used as large temple backdrops. Nilima Sheikh's engagement with tradition wasn't based on a pure adaption of a certain formula nor was it a sentimental approach into the past. Her conscious use of aspects of the miniature painting tradition as well as the references to Asian painting traditions in general grew out of the need to extend an artistic language and style from the India of the 1950s and 1960s whilst being heavily connected and related to Modernism.

In her earliest works of the 1970s Nilima Sheikh adapted miniature paintings to oil paintings. In By the Hill Stream (Fig. 85) (1976), she applies oil thinly and creates a landscape, a geographical terrain very much like in Persian or Mughal paintings.

When Champa Grew Up, (Fig. 86) (1984) is a series of twelve paintings executed in tempera on paper with accompanying text written in ink. Some paintings are divided into two or three sections, building up the narrative content "to delineate the event in time and space."²⁵⁴ The work concerns the tragic dowry-deaths of a girl that Sheikh knew well. The artist paints the story of the life of the young girl, from her childhood to her premature marriage to her entry into a new home with a kitchen and the kerosene stove where she would die in a scandalous case of bride-burning. Champa's playful childhood, depicted in scene 1 and 2, receives a tender, yet vulnerable touch by the image of the girl on the swing where "the rawness of her pink flesh seen through the veil of both skin and clingy fabric"²⁵⁵ hint at the subsequent scenes where the girl, exposed to the wicked mother-in-law, is unprotected and helpless, up until her end, in Champa's funeral pyre (scene 11) where the girl seems to return to her childhood swing, finally freed perhaps from the tragic circumstances of her short lived married life. The range of compositions applied help build up the narrative content; as in scene 3 and scene 4 where Champa's wedding and the subsequent arrival at her mother in law's house are both built up in almost identical tripartite compositions. The central part in scene 3 is occupied by the wedding ceremony with the husband being half in and half out of that central frame. That central scene in the next painting is replaced by Champa entering her new home and confronting her in-laws. Champa's tiny features, against the massive block made up of her mother-in-law and other females of the household, indicate the newlywed's

²⁵⁴Nilima Sheikh, in: "When Champa Grew Up", in Conversations with Traditions. Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander, op. cit. p. 18.

²⁵⁵Ajay J. Sinha, op. cit., p. 196.

emotional status as well as the omen about Champa's unavoidable fate. The railtracks with the dark shadow is another indication of where Champa's wedding will lead. This part in scene 3 is replaced by the kitchen in scene 4, the place Champa will live and die. Scene 7 and scene 9 again pick up compositional similarities. In the centre stage Champa is being beaten by her husband with a belt and her female in-laws with kitchen utensils and base gestures. In the central motive in scene 9 we see, for the last time, Champa working in the kitchen – the conspiracy of her death already unstoppably underway as depicted to the right with mother and son heading into the kitchen. Sheikh chooses to draw this scene in a way that miniature painters would work on their initial drawing before applying colours. These fine lines not only set this scene with Champa, working by the kerosene stove, apart, but elevate it with its details.

In style, the figures Sheikh creates are a personal derivation from Indian miniature painting tradition of the Rajput and Pahari region. Mala Marwah points out that the figures and their gestures are very much related to Japanese art, more precisely to *ukiyo-e*, which means *picture of the floating world* and was popular in the 18th and 19th Century.²⁵⁶ I would like to suggest that the narrative and symbolic elements in her works mainly from the 1980s are also very much in tune with works of artists such as Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944). Yet Sheikh is not opting primarily for form and colour like Gauguin who worked towards a synthetic aesthetic. A portion of realism, symbolism, and expressionism appears in her early works combined with traditional arts from the East. *When Champy Grew Up* is an excellent example of how Nilima Sheikh masters and amalgamates different pasts and presents, creating a very personal vision and language. Her exploration of aspects of miniature paintings, her engagement with the process of making a traditional miniature and history to herself, about interiorizing history.²⁵⁷

The tradition of miniature painting in the South Asian Subcontinent goes a long way back and reaches into the future. This tradition has always been hybrid and it still is. What has been demonstrated so far is the re-awakening process of a medium and a genre where artists at different times make use of this tradition for different reasons and in different ways. What all these artists have in common is the transformational aspect as the overarching activity where one form exchanges itself for another.

²⁵⁶See: Ibidem., p. 193.

²⁵⁷See: Nilima Sheikh in an interview with Vishakha N. Desai, in: *Conversations with Traditions. Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander*, op.cit., p. 75.

4.11 The Question of Tradition

The relationship to tradition and the past has been a difficult undertaking in Pakistan since the creation of the new state. Which tradition and whose tradition can be carved out of the large historical whole of the subcontinent and claimed as an exclusively Pakistani tradition? How do we relate this to the ideology of the state? What do we do with tradition?

The re-establishment of the miniature department at the National College of Arts (NCA) is a singular phenomenon in South Asia which led the traditional medium into the sphere of mainstream art (to avoid classifications such as high and low art). In India, miniature painting maintained its level of craftsmanship while traditional painters primarily painted for the tourist market. In post-Partition India and Pakistan, there was a prevailing stereotype that pre-nineteenth century painting was sentimental and decorative. However, in India, as Vishaka N. Desai notes, “the distinct divide between these professional miniature painters and the art school-trained urban artists is as much based on the class/caste fault lines, which determine so much of social interaction in India, as on different training.”²⁵⁸ The rigorous and traditional training methods of miniature painting given to students at the NCA is thus something art students in India would not normally have access to.

The re-establishment of the miniature department at the NCA can be attributed to the efforts of Bashir Ahmed, Zahoor ul Akhlaq (1941-1999), and Salima Hashmi (b.1942). Both ul Akhlaq and Hashmi, when studying abroad, began to question using oil on canvas as the only acceptable mode of modern art. Akhlaq’s fascination for the great Mughal heritage grew while he was in London. Although Lahore, with its lack of original miniature paintings is theoretically a particularly bad place to study traditional Mughal painting, it nevertheless has, by now, made itself a name as the *Kaderschmiede* for contemporary miniature painters as they become ever more successful on a national and international level. Bashir Ahmed’s training by two professional miniature painters, Mohammad Haji Sharif (1889-1978) and Sheikh Shujauallah (1908-1980), must be seen as part of an unbroken tradition where the knowledge of art-making is passed on from the eldest to the youngest. Once his teachers

²⁵⁸Vishakha N. Desai, “Engaging “Tradition” in the Twentieth-Century Arts of India and Pakistan”, exhibition catalogue *Conversation with Traditions*. Nilima Sheikh. Shahzia Sikander, (New York: Asia Society, 2001), p. 12.

passed away and he replaced them at the NCA, he infused the school with a contemporary spirit, encouraging students to go beyond copying and employ new themes in order to create contemporary compositions within the framework of the traditional medium. Although for some students his methods were still too limiting, he can still be regarded as one of the persons who worked to bring Mughal miniature painting into a new era. He also brought the medium from a minor to a major course within the college. Last but not least, the establishment of the miniature department at the NCA can be interpreted as part of a larger national agenda. For the young nation of Pakistan, the Mughals are embraced as the true ancestors, identifying and solidifying Pakistan's cultural roots.

Referring to the past or reviving tradition by means of art is a constant burden. In the case of teaching miniature painting at NCA, one sees how the rigid curriculum easily leads to a mere revival of the past, fraught with an ideological yearning for that past. This is the case when the act of copying—the most important part of any art student's instruction in miniature painting at the NCA—turns into a simple appropriation of forms, clouding the mind and preventing any discovery of the enormous creative possibilities traditional forms provide in creating a personal language.

Referring to the past has been a very problematic and fundamental issue for Pakistanis, because the traditions they want to acknowledge are in fact pluralised and belonged to the so-called enemy some fifty or sixty years ago. Therefore, claiming Mughal miniatures as a tradition that belongs exclusively to Pakistan must be seen as a political and ideological move. The Great Mughals ruled the Indian empire from 1525 to 1707, so claiming some of this glorious Muslim past as one's own—for example, the achievements of the great Mughal's painting workshops—can also be interpreted as a nostalgic act. Therefore, for artists practicing miniature painting, copying the past is easily confused with nostalgia.

4.12 Muslim Cultural Values and Abdur Rahman Chughtai

After Partition, Abdur Rahman Chughtai was criticized for not being progressive. Chughtai continued to paint “his favourite themes of Mughals, heroes from Islamic history and folk stories....but he also painted college girls, village girls, genre scenes, and nudes.”²⁵⁹ His stylized figures remained more or less the same, and he would still lean towards and borrow from traditional Mughal miniatures, depending on the theme chosen. In Jahangir and Nur Jahan (Fig. 87), a watercolour of the late 1940s, Chughtai looks at traditional Mughal miniatures to depict Jahangir and some parts of the setting. Both Jahangir and Nur Jahan are depicted in profile following the representational code for emperors and courtiers in the Mughal workshops of the 17th Century.²⁶⁰ Compared to Radha Krishna (Fig. 11), the architectural setting, decorative devices, and colour is more reduced, taken back, and less frontal. The subject of this painting, hawking, is “a favourite sport of royalty with a long history in Muslim Asia.”²⁶¹ Similarities between Radha in Fig. 11 and Nur Jahan in Fig. 87 in terms of their position above the male figure may point towards Chughtai’s intention to elevate the female position, or to simply reference Nur Jahan’s strong personality.²⁶²

Abdur Rahman Chughtai’s art was very much rooted in early 20th century art connected to the ideas that grew out of the New Bengal School. However, what set him apart was his emphasis on different cultural values. His local adherence to the Punjab and its culture, as much as his preferences for poetic metaphors from Urdu and Persian poetry (which can be read as Muslim cultural values), define him as a representative of the art scene known as the “Lahore Orientalists”.²⁶³ After Partition, however, Chughtai’s art held little value for the younger generation of artists in Pakistan, since most of them had turned West for artistic inspiration and their general interest lay in breaking with a painful past that seemed not to be theirs anymore.

²⁵⁹Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, op.cit., p. 34.

²⁶⁰For more on the representation of the Mughal portrait see: Ebba Koch, “The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting”, in: King of the World. The Padshahnama, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

²⁶¹Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, op.cit., p. 34.

²⁶²See also, M. N. Sirhandi, Ibidem., p. 35.

²⁶³See: Ibidem., p. 22

4.13 Carrying on With Tradition

It should be noted, however, that there were other artistic minds at work. Lahore housed a variety of artists practicing numerous artistic directions and traditions. Among the few miniature painters who could claim descent from the true tradition of miniature painting were **Haji Mohammad Sharif (18889-1978)** and **Sheikh Shujaullah (1908-1980)**. H. M. Sharif originated from a family of courtly painters at Patiala and preferred to paint Mughal themes in the Mughal style. When he came to Lahore in 1945, he seemed to have filled a vacuum in terms of miniature painting, for there is no mention of other miniature painters in Lahore in the literature of the early twentieth century.²⁶⁴ H. M. Sharif primarily made copies of original works such as Guru Gobind Singh (Fig. 88), who proclaimed himself as the tenth and therefore last human guru of the Sikhs, which is why he is depicted with a halo. His establishment of the Khalsa military order in 1699 is considered one of the most important events in the history of Sikhism. For this reason, the artist complements the paintings with the necessary attributes such as hawk, sword, bow, and arrow. This work is executed on hand-made wasli and the colours are prepared by the artist himself. The exquisite floral decoration on the floor and throne is as finely executed as decorations of that kind in traditional Mughal miniatures. So is the face and the beard of the guru. From 1945 to 1966, H. M. Sharif taught technique and the philosophy of miniature painting at the Mayo School of Arts in Lahore. He was then replaced by Sheikh Shujaullah due to poor eyesight. Before migrating to Lahore in 1947, Shujaullah worked as a successful miniature painter in Delhi, where the British had discovered their interest in this genre. Shujaullah applied a variety of styles, ranging from the northern Indian Pahari style to the central Indian Rajasthani style. Regarding the landscape, hills, river, and the woman, the setting of Woman with Tampura (Fig. 89) is typically Pahari. In terms of colour scheme, the work can be placed towards central India, since Pahari paintings have bright and vivid colours. Sheik Shujaulla was part of a family of artists who claimed that their ancestral lineage goes back to the Muslim invader, Mohammad Bin Qasim, of the South Asian subcontinent.

²⁶⁴See: Ibidem., p. 39.

Haji Mohammad Sharif and Sheikh Shujaullah carried on a tradition that would eventually be regarded as part of Pakistan's artistic backbone. Although their way of pursuing tradition without breaking ties with the past did not create great interest among younger generations of Pakistani artists (it was rather regarded as antiquated, old-fashioned, and non-progressive), these two artists can nevertheless be held responsible for salvaging a tradition and establishing some sort of continuity, so that the establishment of miniature painting as a major area of specialization within the Fine Arts Department in the mid 1980s would be made possible.

However other artists' contributions towards re-awakening an interest in the miniature tradition was far more potent and influential. As mentioned earlier, Zahoor ul Akhlaq and Salima Hashmi can be seen as the driving forces in bringing the somewhat antiquated genre into contemporary focus.

Through his art and teaching, Zahoor ul Akhlaq opened up a variety of ways to critically interrogate cultural practice. His intellectual commitment to and conceptual dialogue with tradition helped pave the way for the next generation of artists to freely engage with the past and present without being burdened with the feelings of guilt.

4.14 Shahzia Sikander (b. 1969): Interference With Tradition

Although Bashir Ahmed did indeed work towards modernisation, Salima Hashmi has pointed out that, besides the rearrangement of compositions, there were not any serious attempts to modernise miniature paintings until the late 1980s.²⁶⁵ Miniature painting draws from a rich and illustrious past with a number of different schools—Persian, Mughal, and Indian—that have their own styles and subject matter. At the same time, challenging miniatures with contemporaneity, the present demands an abandoning of tradition, or interference with tradition, which previously did not suit the so-called traditionalists.

Shahzia Sikander is the first practicing miniature painting artist in Pakistan who successfully took the genre into a new era. Chughtai revived the miniature by negotiating “cosmopolitan frameworks” together with “articulating an idea of a Lahore-based Muslim art.”²⁶⁶ Zahoor ul Akhlaq investigated the medium on a conceptual level. Although he developed a special relationship to the miniature tradition, it remained fairly objective. Sikander enrolled at NCA’s miniature painting course in the late 1980s when there was not a great interest on the campus for a resurgence in that medium: Contemporary art forms and subjects such as photography and printmaking were much more popular then.²⁶⁷ Modernism dominated the curriculum of the NCA and miniature painting had little relevance to the contemporary art world.

The department from which Sikander graduated with only one other student was rigorously headed by Bashir Ahmed. Ahmed was trained in a very traditional manner by Haji Sharif and Sheikh Shujaullah. His emphasis on the traditional technique and teaching method gave the impression of a lack of self-expression, which naturally did not seem inviting for young students. However, Sikander saw the potential in what she called an art form and practice “that predates Partition,” allowing her “to go beyond the restrictions of short-term history.”²⁶⁸ She recognized the conceptual aspect inherent in the miniature tradition and started to explore it on a long term basis.

²⁶⁵See Salima Hashmi, “Radicalising Tradition”, *Art Link – Australia*, Vol 20: Issue 20, 1999, p. 33.

²⁶⁶Iftikhar Dadi, “Miniature Painting as Muslim Cosmopolitanism”, in: *ISIM*, Review 18, Autumn 2006, p. 53.

²⁶⁷From a personal interview with the artist in January 2002 in New York.

²⁶⁸Shahzia Sikander in an interview with Vishakha N. Desai, op.cit., p. 75.

From her pioneering thesis project—seen as a prelude (or opening syllable) to miniature painting as it is popularly practiced in Pakistan today—to her most recent digital video works, this artist has proved the enormous potential for tradition to both transcend time and place. There is no limitation in this area of art history and it becomes a source of perpetual fascination and inspiration.

Sikander's work, The Scroll (Fig. 90), represents images that are both personal and present, depicting herself as an actor in her own home in Lahore. With its measurements, she initiated new ways of working in this medium that were in no way limiting, but open to explore all kinds of different directions, sizes, and contents.²⁶⁹ After moving to the United States to study at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1992, she began to reference Modernism as one of the historical styles in her work. She also referenced the common imagery she encountered in America, loosely referred to as American popular culture. Sikander also began working on different scales, moving from small, jewel-like paintings to a grand format. These grand-scale works were not only executed on canvas and paper, but also as installations based on the highly-developed Indian mural paintings.

In a large triptych from 2000 entitled Elusive Realities (Fig. 91 and Fig. 92), she uses the recurrent motif of the cowboy boot—an image of popular American culture which was very exotic for Sikander while she was living in Houston, Texas. This proves no less that, contingent on the audience's experience and background, a certain element can appear extraordinary. Just as for most Westerners, the veil is regarded as unusual, for a Pakistani artist like Shahzia Sikander, having arrived in Houston for the first time, the elaborate styles of these boots were incredibly exotic. "They also seemed to be a central part of a specifically 'Texan' identity, one distinct from being 'American'."²⁷⁰ The subject in this work—a central female figure in three different yoga poses—represents a strong woman having to cope with the imposed pressure from society, religion, family, and self-prescribed expectations. Other elements in this work can be referred to as being a part of Sikander's personal repertoire, such as dots, circular forms, spirals, Islamic geometric tilework, foliage in Kangra painting style, and cowboy boots. The dots refer to bindi dots as much as they do to Roy Liechtenstein's signature Benday dots. In Riding the Ridden (Fig. 93) 2000, multi-coloured dots migrate from

²⁶⁹For a detailed description on The Scroll see: Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, op.cit., pp.81-83.

²⁷⁰Shahzia Sikander in conversation with Debra Singer, "The Nearness of Difference", in: Shahzia Sikander Acts of Balance, exhibition catalogue, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, 2000) p.6.

within the inner frame to the border area, enhancing the intimate connection of separate elements while still emphasizing the coexistence of different picture planes. The dots in Sikander's work also seem to bridge the gap between the figurative and the abstract: an assumed dichotomy that has so often dominated twentieth century art and art theory.²⁷¹

In her quest to explore the miniature style—Mughal, Rajput, and Persian alike—Sikander has probed the extremely hybrid and multi-dimensional aspects of miniatures in their most traditional form. From the illustrative, the narrative, and the abstract—all inherent in these varied miniature schools—the artist has been drawn to the hierarchy within the practice, the investment of labour and time, and issues of scale, precision, and gesture.²⁷² The introduction of her work to the American and, later, to the international public happened in the 1990s, in the middle of so-called identity politics. As a result of this, her work underwent an exotification of some kind: The veil that featured in her work at that time became the lens through which much of her work was seen (i.e. Shahzia Sikander being a Muslim woman). In Ready to Leave (Fig. 94), dating from 1997, the artist seems to respond to or play with such reductionism by covering the face of the woman in the centre of the painting, not with the traditional veil, but with a flat round circle. By placing this abstract shape onto the illustratively detailed and rendered woman, Sikander seems to point towards—in modernist language—the flatness of the medium painting, while at the same time interfering with the traditional miniature painting. This interference happens on many levels in her work: In Ready to Leave it can be witnessed in the gestural marks she sets around and outside the portrait in the oval frame. As if further referencing the persistent stereotype of the veiled Muslim woman in Western culture, the artist humorously dresses the griffin—a fabulous animal with a lion's body, wings, and the head of an eagle—with a white-fringed veil. Most meaningful to Sikander is the griffin's hybrid nature. She refers to its Punjabi transliteration as a chillava, where, due to Alexander the Great, Greek mythology, and the Hellenic world, the griffin has become a standard figure that describes a certain kind of personality. A chillava, she explains:

“...is somebody who is coming and going so fast you can't pin down who they are....The Chillava has multiple identities, and it reflects the sort of rhetoric or categories that I am confronted with. Are you Muslim, Pakistani, artist, painter, Asian, Asian-American, or what?

²⁷¹For more on these paintings and other works by the artist of this time see: Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, op.cit., pp 79 - 93

²⁷²From a personal interview with the artist in October, 2003, Sevilla.

But it is not my agenda to say that I belong to any of these categories....I am interested in hybridity.”²⁷³

Sikander also relates the griffin to her experience living in the United States, where she comes across as exotic to other people and therefore gets questioned about her identity. At the same time, it reflects her status living in between cultures, and of being a minority where the sense of being appropriate is in suspense.²⁷⁴ Although the recurrent motif of the circle in Sikander’s work can be found in Hindu, Islamic, and Christian cultures, I would suggest that in this painting in particular, it can be read as what Sharon Mizota calls, “a quietly subversive act, inviting the viewer to read modernism through the lens of South Asian miniature painting rather than vice versa.”²⁷⁵

The first serious introduction to Shahzia Sikander’s work happened in 1997, at the Drawing Center and the Whitney Biennial. Sikander began to explore experimental drawing and shifted the scale from the miniature to the mural. What followed were mural installations shown at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago in 1999, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2000, and at the Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC in 2002, to name but a few exhibitions at that time. Chaman (Fig. 95) shows a mural that Sikander installed at the Whitney Museum in 2000. The paintings that cover the wall are themselves partly covered by layers of vertical bands of translucent paper that hang loosely down the walls. Some contain images or abstract shapes, but most of them simply function to hide certain areas and expose others. These ribbons can be read as references to both the Muslim veil and the Islamic scroll. While the veil seems to hide certain areas (e.g. a woman’s face, head, or body), they also accentuate those parts that are not covered. A veil may segregate people but it can not seal them off. Instead, a veil provokes curiosity and offers visual pleasure through exhibitionism and voyeurism. This is exactly what happens to the audience inspecting Sikander’s installation. It is as if one wants to lift the bands in order to see what is underneath. This game with hiding, covering, and blurring images coexists in her large-scale paintings and miniatures, where dots often obstruct the view of carefully-rendered details.

²⁷³Shahzia Sikander, in “Chillava Klatch: Shahzia Sikander Interviewed by Homi Bhabha”, in Shahzia Sikander, exhibition catalogue, (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, 1998), p. 19.

²⁷⁴See also: Simone Wille, Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New, op.cit., pp. 85, 86, 87.

²⁷⁵Sharon Mizota, “Gallery”, in: Fresh Talk Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), p. 70.

The installation of tissue drawings is concerned with labour and time. Miniature painting, and the way the artist has been trained in that medium, has a lot to do with time and labour, craft and technique. A great deal of emphasis is put on making meticulously executed copies of Mughal miniatures and other school's miniatures that serve as patterns. Time is of the essence when layer upon layer is applied to the wasli. In the tissue drawings, the artist seems to enjoy the exact opposite. In reference to the contrasting process between miniature painting and tissue drawings, Shahzia Sikander explained, "I try to keep them spontaneous, gestural. There is a rigor behind them, but they are much more open, democratic. They are not fussy or fetishistic...The tissue drawings are not about the exclusivity associated with skill...They are the opposite...With these drawings, there is no beginning or end."²⁷⁶

These works demonstrate the artist's ability to move freely between different times, cultures, styles, and places; and her choice to work on both a grand and a small scale, while more or less requiring laborious effort. The wall drawing is full of Sikander's own personally created iconography. The Texan boots, lines and dots, veil, and starburst shapes—some of these elements will disappear from her repertoire and some will remain, further exploring the hidden secrets of the jewel-like miniatures.

In 1998, to address the recent history of Islam, the artist was commissioned by the New York Times. The Resurgence of Islam (Fig. 96) appears to be two pages of an illustrated book that is reminiscent of the traditional Persian painting style. Here, Sikander chose to gather a diverse range of figures—a complex contemporary history of Islam where personages such as Benazir Bhutto, Nawal el Saadawi, Salman Rushdie, and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are perpetuated. Benazir Bhutto appears wearing the American flag as a dupatta above a banner that bears the inscription, "Daughter of the East?" The artist seems to question the justness of the former Prime Minister's homonymous autobiography (*Daughter of the East*, 1989), written while having undergone elite English education in Harvard and Oxford. The man whose face is depicted just above Bhutto is Zia ul Haq, who removed her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as Prime Minister from office and had him hanged. The Persianated central figures on both pages are connected by a piece of cloth that shows the back of the American one dollar bill with Urdu inscriptions.

²⁷⁶Shahzia Sikander, in "Chillava Klatch: Shahzia Sikander Interviewed by Homi Bhabha", in: Shahzia Sikander, exhibition catalogue, (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, 1998), p. 20.

Thus far, Shahzia Sikander has been experimenting with the art history of traditional miniature painting schools. The act of copying has been taken very seriously by the artist from the time of her rigorous training at the NCA. Copying is about understanding—understanding the medium and understanding history.²⁷⁷ It is only by following this precision that the artist came to learn what lies behind the lines, colours, and layers. By stripping off layers and by culling information and images from historical and personal sources, the artist is not simply hijacking tradition in order to collage multiple paths over each other. She proves again and again that the space of miniature painting is a big concept, despite its seemingly tight parameters. She proves it most remarkably in a series of graphite drawings executed in 2004, titled 51 Ways of Looking (Fig. 97-100). The drawings start with a sphere and a rectangle, the latter referring literally to the abstracted space of representation. The black rectangle is used as a base out of which the following drawings are created. The rectangle also alludes to the core of a traditional miniature painting, or book illustration in Mughal India, which was mounted on illuminated borders and bound into albums, according to imperial wishes. Only occasionally were these pictures mounted on walls.²⁷⁸ The sphere alludes to a fundamental unit: the abyss. What follows is an uncontrolled unforced narrative that allows each viewer to step inside the secret of the traditional medium Sikander is about to reveal to us. In other words, she wants us to see how she has experienced it.

By isolating elements that would normally lie underneath layers of drawing and paint and by presenting them singularly on the wall, we are directly confronted with a selection of iconography the artist has used again and again in her works. Some of these images are personal creations (Fig. 99) and others live in traditional miniatures containing hidden information we might usually not discover. From geometry and ornamentation (Fig. 100) to decorative pattern, which adorn the borders of a traditional miniature painting, Sikander also directs our gaze to hidden information in a way that informs us of the limitation of translations. In a way, the fact that Sikander translates and works with the secrets of these old master pieces reminds me of Johannes Itten's, "Analyses of Old Masters," where he describes that "to experience [*erleben*] a work of art is to re-experience it, to rouse the essential and living character that rests within its form as one's own personal life. The work of art is born anew in us."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷See also: Shahzia Sikander interviewed by Vishakha N. Desai, op.cit., p. 75-76.

²⁷⁸See: Stuart Cary Welch, Imperial Mughal Painting, (New York: George Braziller, 1978), p. 13.

²⁷⁹Johannes Itten (1888-1967), „Analyses of Old Masters“ in: Art in Theory. 1900-2000. An Anthology of Changing Ideas, ed. By Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), p. 304.

In yet another step of translating, exploring, re-experiencing, and charting multiple presences, Shahzia Sikander, by using digital technology, manages to show us yet another aspect of timeless narrative, which she prefers to confront us with using an illustration. SpiNN (Fig. 101), a 6-minute and 38-second digital movie—her first in a series of three animated video works so far—is primarily based on an image from the seventeenth century Mughal manuscript, the famous Padshahnama. As a point of departure, Sikander uses the balcony setting, the Diwan-I-'Amm, where Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan (Fig. 102). In the seventeenth century painting, the scene depicts the Emperor Jahangir receiving his victorious son, Prince Khurram (later named Emperor Shah Jahan), on the jharoka, or balcony. The assembly, or darbar, below the jharoka is crowded with nobles and attendants to the scene. Such scenes (and the art in general during Shah-Jahan's reign and patronage) developed their own formalism to underline the ruling power structure. According to Ebba Koch, "programmatic statements were expressed through aesthetic means; artistic style could serve as an interpretational key. Through the manipulation of antithetical modes, Mughal painting developed its own pictorial code, to supplement, comment on and paraphrase historiography."²⁸⁰

In SpiNN Shahzia Sikander starts by clearing the scene of all human beings (i.e. of all male protagonists). The artist thereby frees the historical image of all information and uses the setting to create new meaning or foster different information to present a different reality.

The empty jharoka scene slowly starts to fill up with swarms of light and dark coloured gopis (Fig. 101,103), inhabiting a space that was originally assigned to the emperor. These gopis are copies of classical gopis such as can be found in an image of c. 1700 from a Bhagavata Purana-Series (Fig. 104). The subject of the historical miniature painting is about Krishna stealing the bathing cowgirls' clothes. "Determined to test the cow-girls devotion to him, Krishna catches thirteen of them bathing naked in the river Jamuna, collects up their clothes, and, unnoticed, climbs up with them into a large kadamba tree. The girls discover their loss and are shown in various postures, covering their nakedness and begging Krishna to return their clothes."²⁸¹ Sikander uses these gopis as models and re-creates and re-arranges them in the balcony setting. The two gopis to the right of the Mankot painting, namely the one sticking her finger to her mouth in astonishment with a second gopi embracing her from the

²⁸⁰ Ebba Koch, "The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Paintings", op.cit., p. 141.

²⁸¹ W. G. Archer, Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills: A Survey and History of Pahari Miniature Painting, vol. I and II. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 294.

back with one arm. This gopi couple has been used several times and as a mirror image as can be seen in Fig. 103. Furthermore the gopi to the very left in the Mankot painting, holding her left hand out to receive clothes from Krishna sitting in the tree has been reproduced in Spinn as can be seen in the left hand part of the still in Fig. 103. Gopis, the lovers of the blue god, Krishna, appear again and again in Sikander's work and are used here to interfere with hierarchical orders. Lord Krishna, whose name means, "dark", is a god of youth and the most accessible and popular of the Hindu deities. Krishna's connection to cows derives from pre-Aryan times when it is believed that he was adored by a tribe that deified cows. The Vedic literature makes him a worshipper of cattle, the Mahabharata makes him a lowly cow herder, and in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna is the eighth avatar of Vishnu, who took his form to slay the tyrant, Kamsa. When the latter was warned by a sage, Krishna had to be protected from Kamsa's order to slaughter all infants. This is when Krishna was delivered to grow up in the sacred groves of Vrindavan (the herd forest), in the world of the gopis and gopalas (herdswomen and herdsman), where he developed his talents as the Divine Lover.²⁸²

Let us return to the balcony setting, the Diwan-I-'Amm, where the main protagonists of the past performed in a formalized, ceremonial manner. As opposed to this ordered and controlled world is the multiplying of the female characters in Sikander's version that seems uncontrolled. The gopis gestures and gazes – which in the Mankot painting are directed towards Krishna sitting in the tree – in Spinn suggest the arrival of something or someone. When the space is nearly overcrowded with gopis in anticipation black hair parts (Fig.105) — appearing at first glance like bats—overtake and clear the gopis from stage to make room for the next entrance of characters. A black flying creature with a stick and a piece of cloth tied to it (Fig. 106) appears next. This figure in Safawid style seems to be inspired from a 16th century painting depicting Solomon on his Flying Throne (Fig. 107). In the middle but towards the upper border one angel of the princely household seems to have stayed model for Sikander's black angel in Fig. 106. The solomonic angel's branch or leaf bunch has been substituted with a stick and a piece of cloth tied to it that seems to be a useful tool for clearing the stage off all the hair pieces so that the following scene can take place.

More flying creatures are to come to chase away this angel subject. The following group (Fig. 108) is reminiscent of angels and flying fairies which can be compared with an illustration

²⁸²See S. C. Welch, India: Art and Culture, 1300-1900, (New York : The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), pp. 33-34.

from the Gulshan-i-Ishq (Fig. 109).²⁸³ The Gulshan-i-Isqh was written in 1657-58 in Deccani Urdu which was the Muslim elite's language of South-central India. Together with mystical Sufi concepts the idea for the text originates in a north Indian Hindu love story. What is remarkable is the variety of languages Deccani Urdu incorporates. Amongst others there are words from Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Marathi languages.

With some modifications, the Deccani-style painting, dated 1743, seems to have been copied by Sikander: For example, she uses details such as the cluster of winged fairies supported by the wind, which makes their skirts balloon. She has chosen not to include Raja Bikram, who, in the 18th Century painting, is being carried by the flying fairies. Instead, Sikander challenges the scene with a pair of "Blasengel," leaving the male protagonist out.

These fairies, angels or winged figures announce the next entrance (Fig. 110) of a composite animal, composed of various females here, dominated and ridden by the darkly coloured Lord Krishna. The composite animal can also be seen as a vehicle "made up of devotees bearing Krishna."²⁸⁴ Composite animals were a popular subject in many schools of Indian painting and are often composed of animals and human figures, sometimes ridden by a demon. Sikander's creation can be compared to a mid-nineteenth century Rajastani Painting from Nathdvara, where we see Krishna riding an elephant composed of Nine Girls (Fig. 111). Although Sikander has chosen to make the animal look more like a horse—its legs are borrowed from female inhabitants—its head is that of a female, playfully sticking her two fingers in her ears in a mocking gesture. Even though Krishna seems to dominate the ride because of his position on the horse, the question is left open as to who is in charge.

In the next image (Fig. 112) a fairy and a putto – taken from Fig. 108 – open up the jharoka scene to show us what lies behind this formal setting. Here again we see figures from Solomon's flying retinue, taken from the Safawid painting described earlier with Fig. 107.

What follows is a step behind the balcony setting (Fig. 113) into a hilly landscape, where the theme of creation and destruction is once more emphasized; where demonic creators are

²⁸³ The Gulshan-i-Isqh was written in 1657-58 in Deccani Urdu which was the Muslim elite's language of South-central India. Together with mystical Sufi concepts the idea for the text originates in a north Indian Hindu love story

²⁸⁴ Barbara Rossi, From the Ocean of Painting. India's popular Paintings: 1589 to the Present, (New York: Oxford University Press: 1998), p. 72.

busily constructing and deconstructing. Opposing sides seem to meet in a scene where members of the solomonic company from Fig. 107 appear again to place a cloth across a full-circle halo inhabited by an Indian female and a sixteenth century derivation of Venus (Fig. 114). While the two main characters are depicted with a building in construction—one busy with the constructing and the other wanting to take part in the construction—the Indian figure, in a peaceful gesture, holds out a lotus, offering to celebrate otherness and forget about hierarchies and one-sided histories. The symbolic message of the lotus flower in various cultures is that of continuity of birth and rebirth. The lotus is also being seen as the symbol of cosmic harmony.²⁸⁵

The underlying theme of this image reminds us of an earlier work by Shahzia Sikander, Much Maligned Monsters (Fig. 115) (2000), where the artist brings together images from both Western and Eastern art history. Here, Agnolo Bronzino's (Agnolo di Cosimo) (1503-72) high-Mannerist and light-skinned Allegory of Venus serves as a pedestal for a twelfth century Indian sculpture of a dancing figure. The darker Devata adapts to the shape of the Venus, the whole composition resulting in perfect meditation and harmony, as if to demonstrate that by deviation from the classical norm, a liaison is possible. Flirting with different times, styles, and traditions is what the artist seems to make possible. While the red letters of the inscription, MOMA, refer to the museum by which the work has been commissioned, Maligned Monsters derives from the title of a pioneering work of postcolonial debate by Partha Mitter. He was the first to discuss the history of European reactions to Indian art, which was based on certain myths and yet still remains a misunderstood tradition to Western scholars.²⁸⁶ According to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717-68) immensely influential doctrine, where he proclaims Greek's classical art and culture superior to all arts, Mannerism and Indian art, both being decadent, mark a departure from the peak of classical perfection. "In a complex union," as Fereshteh Daftari puts it, "Sikander links one supposed digression with another and highlights the condition of being different through these much maligned monsters of time."²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, (London: Penguin Books, first published 1994, 1996), p. 616-18.

²⁸⁶ Partha Mitter, Preface, Much Maligned Monsters: History of European reactions to Indian art, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), vii.

²⁸⁷ Fereshteh Daftari, Projects 70: Janine Antoni, Shahzia Sikander, Kara Walker, exhibition brochure (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2000), N. pag.

Shahzia Sikander in SpiNN seems to refer consciously to Ebba Koch's essay "Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore"²⁸⁸ but has told me that she has not come across this writing²⁸⁹. It is nevertheless interesting to see how closely linked this work seems in terms of style and form with the images Ebba Koch discovered and described. In her text Ebba Koch analyzes the remains of the fresco cycle on the vault of the Kala Burj – the second residential tower - at the Fort of Lahore.²⁹⁰ Koch uncovers "European-Christian influences in style of representation and in the choice of the figures" yet does not fail to show that "the European forms were given the liberty to escape from their original context in order to express a concept deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition of rulership."²⁹¹ The wall paintings consist of birds, stars, and angels, the latter being a derivation "from a European prototype, namely the boyish (half) nude putto image."²⁹² We know that through missionary activities the Jesuits have introduced engravings that included the putto angel at the Moghul court starting from about 1580.²⁹³ Koch, in her essay, uses the image of The Descent from the Cross (Fig. 116) from 1598 as a comparative example between the puttos in the painting and the angels in the vault. It is from this image that Sikander in SpiNN has copied one putto or Blasengel referred to earlier in Fig. 108. We are talking about the putto to the left in The Descent from the Cross, with his legs bent up showing us his soles of his feet. The long stretched body seems extended through the long wind-instrument. Sikander has placed this putto slightly below the ikaroka scene and uses the same as a mirror image squeezed in between the crowd of flying fairies. In the very last image of SpiNN (Fig. 117) Sikander makes use of the second Blasengel or putto from The Descent from the Cross where the composite animals rider, Krishna, is being replaced by one of the fairies we saw earlier in Fig. 110.

Having established the historical background out of which SpiNN has been created its contemporary meaning remains to be uncovered. Let us return to the beginning, the balcony setting. The Diwan-I-'Amm, being a formal setting for public audiences, is the centre stage for a narrative which is being created out of elements that derive from various miniature painting

²⁸⁸ Ebba Koch, "Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore" in: Ebba Koch, Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, (collected Essays), (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). Reprinted from India and the West: Proceedings of a Seminar Dedicated to the Memory of Hermann Goetz, ed. By Joachim Deppert (New Delhi: 1983).

²⁸⁹ I have asked Shahzia Sikander in November 2010 if she has read Ebba Kochs essay mentioned here but she has told me that she has not.

²⁹⁰ The Lahore Fort was completed by the Mughal ruler Akbar in about 1580 and altered during Mughal rule by Jahangir and Shah Jahan (1628-58). Ebba Koch, in: "Jahangir and the Angels", op.cit., p. 15, footnote 7.

²⁹¹ Ebba Koch, "Jahangir and the Angels", op. cit., p. 15.

²⁹² See: Ibidem., p. 20.

²⁹³ See: Ibidem, p. 20.

schools spanning from the early sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. European sources, namely the two putto angels in Fig. 112 and Fig. 117 are taken from Mughal miniatures and have therefore already “undergone a Mughalization”²⁹⁴, to use Ebba Koch’s words. Since both, The Descent from the Cross and Solomon on his Flying Throne are images that are discussed and presented in Koch’s essay “Jahangir and the Angels” it seems noteworthy to scrutinize this text to find out if there are connections to be made with regard to the contents. One aspect seems notable, namely the symbolism with which rulership has been associated with and underlined with pictorially during Mughal time in general and during Jahangir’s and Shah Jahan’s reign and patronage in particular. The fresco cycle of the Kala Burj with its well preserved winged beings and not preserved but documented jinns²⁹⁵ can be linked with “a special Solomonic iconography” that had “developed in painting”.²⁹⁶ In fact, “each Islamic ruler compared himself with Solomon”²⁹⁷ and so did Mughal emperors.²⁹⁸ Dews, jinns together with the whole flying retinue accompanying Solomon, the archetypal ruler of the Qu’an is said to be ruling “over the seen and unseen world.”²⁹⁹ In SpiNN, Sikander clearly references Shah Jahani and Jahangiri art. She makes use of various iconographies Ebba Koch has discussed in her essay “Jahangir and the Angles” to establish a framework for a narrative that is far from an attempt to appropriate one religion or culture to another but instead reconfigures and negotiated them in terms of global cultural, aesthetic and ideological currents.

Sofar it can be said that Sikander explicitly invokes history by opposing or substituting Muslim versus Hindu versus Christian/European motifs. Through her playing with different iconographies - Muslim and Hindu, Christian and European - she not only questions hierarchical orders, but in an extended way and with formal and subjective devices, she questions the claim for purity in art-making and cultural symbols. Homi K. Bhabha in an interview with Shahzia Sikander asked her about her dealing with differences, with her exchanging of various characters and symbols from various historical backgrounds in her work. He felt that she is not so much “addressing East meets West” but “more interesting” he found is that she is addressing “the difference between the East and the East, the nearest of

²⁹⁴ Ebba Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels”, op.cit., p. 21.

²⁹⁵ William Finch, in: Samuel Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, vol. IV, pp. 53-6, in: Ebba Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels”, op.cit., p. 29.

²⁹⁶ Ebba Koch, ibidem. p.32.

²⁹⁷ Ibidem, p. 32.

²⁹⁸ See Ebba Koch, ibidem. p. 32. See also Oeg Grabar, The Alhambra, (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 150.

²⁹⁹ Ebba Koch, “Jahangir and the Angels”, op.cit., p. 32. See also: “Solomon” in, Dictionary of Islam, www.answering-islam.org, p. 601-4. Nov. 16th, 2010.

difference, the intimacy of difference that can exist within any culture. Yet difference” for Bhabha “is not homogenized”³⁰⁰ in Sikanders work. Quite the contrary Sikander uncovers so-called visual simplification of history, Hindu and Muslim, Indian and Pakistani, Eastern and Western. SpiNN is an example of how in accordance with seventeenth century Shah-Jahani art, and in reference to the powerful mass media corporations these days, Sikander makes us aware of political polarity and how it has shaped and still shapes our perception. Thus the Diwan-I-'Amm in SpiNN, as an appropriated space, is being rearticulated as the territory from which a consciously constructed narrative with polyglot iconographies invites a symbolic re-reading of the past. The connection is to be made with mass media where similar mechanisms are at work:

If we want to get to the core information, we have to read between the lines, or, to put it in Shahzia Sikander’s words, read “behind layers of perception that suggest multiple meanings.”³⁰¹ This hierarchical principle also manifests itself on another level, namely the process of creating a traditional miniature. As opposed to the digital process, the process involved of creating a miniature painting is labour intensive. By combining these oppositional modalities—a non-traditional medium (digital technology) with traditional painting—Sikander manages to fuse the past and the present so they become multiple presences addressing timelessness in tradition. In this way, she seeks to destabilize the perception of a mutually and often-perceived exoticism, while at the same time addressing gender and power hierarchies.

In terms of the making of SpiNN- the central image, the balcony setting, was drawn first and it acted as a stage for the events to take place. Some 15-25 gopis were then drawn separately on a white background. They were cut and pasted to give the illusion of a mass of gopis, strategically placed in the background. The hair movements were painted in more than twenty clusters to drop into the piece. The cluster of angels were each painted separately and brought together. Some patterns were painted in small amounts and then extended in photoshop. Layers were all created in photoshop and all other alterations were done in photoshop as well.

³⁰⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, “Chillava Klatch: Shahzia Sikander interviewed by Homi Bhabha”, in Shahzia Sikander, exhibition catalogue, (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, 1998), p. 18.

³⁰¹ Shahzia Sikander, “Nemesis: A Dialogue with Shahzia Sikander by Ian Berry”, on: www.shahziasikander.com, 25.5.2010.

A huge amount of additional images were edited in the end. The artist refers to them as the silent or hidden layers in the photoshop files. To summarize: the drawing foundation builds around three to five elaborate drawings and then some fifty and even more individual elements were painted. All changes or additions are painted on separate white papers, not on the main surface for it is easy to drop the white background and move the image around in after effects.³⁰²

The way the artist uses digital technology to create animation is not very different from how she has worked on miniatures, murals, and room-scale installations. Drawings, consisting of selected imagery derived from sources as diverse as art history, popular culture, and a range of personal inventions and creations, are scanned into digital files where the hand-drawn elements are manipulated to eliminate the sense of craft so that they can smoothly follow one another in sequence. With the move towards digital technology, the artist made another attempt in destabilizing the so-called purity of the traditional painting.

Although it is tempting to see Shahzia Sikander's work as expressing a subtle but insistent nostalgia for the past (or a romantic recreation of the past), her claims to a tradition which predates colonial times must also be seen as a reaction to the modernist tradition in her country. Since Modernism was a predominantly male domain in Pakistan at the time she studied at the NCA, Sikander recognised a potential in the miniature tradition that was just waiting to be discovered. Through the act of copying, the personal started to take on an important role. "Copying can mean understanding," Sikander has said. "You have to look at someone else's work very carefully and then relate to it in a personal way."³⁰³ However complex the notion of copying is, Shahzia Sikander has truly helped to situate this medium on an international level. With her work she has initiated a new discourse on tradition itself.

³⁰² All of these technical details are from personal conversations with the artist between 2002 and 2010.

³⁰³ Shahzia Sikander, interviewed by Vishakha N. Desai, op.cit., p. 74.

4.15 The Potential of the Miniature Tradition

Shahzia Sikander's revolutionary scroll work from 1991-92 (Fig. 92) seems to have precipitated an avalanche of new miniatures in Pakistan. Increasing numbers of students graduating from the miniature department at the National College of Arts since 1992 are proof of this trend. Numerous exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad seem to indicate the medium's high reputation. An audience, keen on collecting new miniature paintings for different reasons—historical, romantic, and practical—has reinforced this spectacular trend.³⁰⁴ By exploring the possibilities of the traditional miniature technique, some artists have managed to stage a witty and visually engaging social critique.

An investigation into what artists address and the kind of elements they use in their small-scale paintings reveals a great deal about Pakistan's socio-political and cultural agenda; about the self and the conflict with identity that occurs in a postcolonial country still caught up in feudal structures, corruption, and Western interventions. Within the medium, artists also bring forth gender issues, but they also reflect very clearly the conflicts that arise in a Third World country with the emergence of globalisation.

Although the artists are often addressing political and social problems, their renderings often come across as witty and ironic—unlike the art in the late 1970s and 80s, when the burden of the dictatorship asked from the artists' work a much heavier and more critical voice. The deep concern within the artworks produced during this time was due to two factors: Firstly, most of the practicing artists had either experienced the painful partition and aftermath of Pakistan and India or were part of the first generation that was born in Pakistan and had witnessed two wars with India. Secondly, General Zia ul Haq's suppression had influenced the whole country, regardless of private and public spaces.

Many successful artists today use the miniature genre to experiment at both formal and conceptual levels. The following two artists, **Mohammad Imran Qureshi** and **Aisha Khalid**, are representatives, influential in the way the new miniature movement has developed out of Lahore.

³⁰⁴See: Quddus Mirza, "New Miniature", in "Encore" in: *The News on Sunday*, 27-01-2008.

4.16 Mohammad Imran Qureshi (b. 1972)

Mohammad Imran Qureshi can be regarded as a pioneer of the new miniature movement. This started after Shahzia Sikander's successful debut in Pakistan, which led to her subsequent international career. Although Sikander should be seen as the artist who, along with Zahoor ul Akhlaq, inspired the medium with new confidence, her approach has yet to be distinguished from other artists working within the medium with regards to concept, intention, and result. While Sikander, who lives in New York, is regarded as an international artist belonging to a huge diasporic community, artists in Pakistan working and trained as miniature painters will be referred to collectively here as the new miniature painters.

Imran Qureshi says he wants to come "to terms with the fact that if a hundred years ago this art form was a reflection of its time and environment, today's artist is far more aware of these concerns."³⁰⁵ As if to prove this, Qureshi initially began painting personal items and his own environment. Shirts, pants, sofas, and household items came to replace (or be placed in the context of) Mughal imagery.

His early works show human figures which were later eliminated. In Fig. 118, Qureshi makes use of an album painting depicting Jahangir's Dream (Fig. 119). Jahangir (the "World Seizer"), who succeeded his father Akbar in 1605, reigned until his death in 1627. Whereas under Akbar a large quantity of illustrated manuscripts and albums were produced, Jahangir concentrated on fewer productions. The more vision that Jahangir's patronage of painting reflects is rendered in his dream. Commissioning an artist to illustrate an allegorical picture based upon the emperor's dream would not have been imaginable under Akbar's reign. Imperial Mughal miniatures of the first half of the 17th century were highly reflective—thus Qureshi later rediscovers this original potential to express his present time.

"Fretful over the possible loss to the Safavis of the strategic fortress of Qandahar, Jahangir had a dream of Shah 'Abbas Safavi appearing in a well of light and making him happy...Eager to please his worried patron, Abu'l Hasan painted a frail Shah 'Abbas with fashionably hennaed hands, cowering in the embrace of mighty Jahangir. Like the Hindu god Ganesh on his rodent vehicle, the royal pair is borne by tactfully selected animals, which in

³⁰⁵Imran Qureshi, in an unpublished article given to me in May 2001 in Amsterdam.

turn rest on a terrestrial globe. The Mughal strides on a powerful but peaceful lion that has nudged the Shah's miserable sheep into the Mediterranean."³⁰⁶

That the peaceful appearance of Shah 'Abbas remained a dream has been known since 1622, when the Persians took Qandahar. Jahangir was too busy defending himself against his own son's rebellion. Although Jahangir's painted dream allocates the Persian ruler to the Western hemisphere, the situation has been arranged on an amicable basis, since Shah 'Abbas is part of Nur ud-din ("Light of Religion"). This shining halo, as Jahangir, expresses it, is "the massed light of sun and moon," as Welch puts it, which is "supported by European-inspired angels."³⁰⁷

Qureshi's parody replaces two historical rulers for two contemporary male figures in jeans and T-shirts, one of them wearing a shirt with a colourful print reminiscent of an Eastern style. Leaving out the European-inspired angels, he plants grass, leaves, and flowers on the globe where the Mughal painting depicts the world map. By replacing the two historical figures with two nameless ones, he seems to be coming to terms with history and tradition, making a statement as an artist who dares to stray from the prescribed path. As if Jahangir's dream depends on how the respective painter interprets the story, Qureshi goes so far as to render the royal dream differently (Fig. 120). The composition is situated in an ellipse, two halves separated by a tree. The two male figures in the orange-coloured half of the ellipse are almost the same as in Fig. 118 — embracing each other. However, this time they are not positioned on their selected animals. While the royal pair seem to have found a peaceful solution, the two animals—a lion and a bull—are far from being in an amicable embrace: The lion is about to kill the roaring bull. Neither situation—the peaceful pact nor the victorious fatal sting—are in agreement with reality. Qureshi calls the painting Beware the buyers. Is the artist commenting on the art market or political/ economic intervention?

The tender embrace of the two males in all three illustrations (Fig. 118 Fig. 119, and Fig. 120) carries an unusual sense of intimacy between victor and victim, even though two males embracing is not unusual in the East. However, it becomes more playful in Qureshi's parody (Fig. 118 and Fig. 120). Animals and human figures are conjured up in a comical relationship by the artist, and the question arises as to whether or not the surrender to a certain inclination will lead to decay. The two male characters in Fig. 118 and Fig. 120 are rendered by Qureshi

³⁰⁶Stuart Cary Welch, Imperial Mughal Painting, (New York: George Braziller, 1978), p.81.

³⁰⁷Ibid., p. 81.

with painterly humour and insight. Their two incarnations are quite lyrical in context and therefore refer—as do the colours red and orange—to Kangra paintings. Salima Hashmi's remarks are to the point when she says that Qureshi's "work recalls...an allusion to human frailties and peccadilloes."³⁰⁸

Far from imitating the past, Qureshi extends the miniature tradition and charts his own innovative way. In the past, miniature paintings were part of a manuscript or an album and were therefore never separate from the original script. With reference to the importance that Qureshi gives to the text, Salima Hashmi says: "When using these pages he enjoys the multiplicity of messages he creates."³⁰⁹ For Fig. 121, he took a page from an old text and used it as the surface of his painting.³¹⁰ The border of the painting remains unpainted and therefore shows the script. This result has two effects: allusions to antiquity, and the replacement of the Mughal paintings' beautifully decorated borders with a script that would have otherwise been found in a manuscript. Antiquity and authenticity are also highlighted by the tea-stained wasli paper, particularly accentuated in Fig. 121.

By depicting the same subject (Fig. 122), he has left some of the text as part of the imagery. This aspect of replacing and pushing aside is very evident in Qureshi's work and should be seen, not only as a statement of his art, but also as a commitment to the miniature genre and its possibilities. The utilization of margins is a phenomenon that developed in 15th century Persian painting. These border decorations contained pastoral scenes in wash colours and gold. Jahangir brought the border decoration to perfection with naturalistic trees, landscape elements, animals, and even human figures.³¹¹ The literal bursting out of the frame also meant, according to Losty, an "enlargement to the painted area to a size hitherto unknown for paper manuscripts...(that) creates a grandiose effect altogether fitting for these works."³¹² If it is not a "grandiose" effect (in the sense of size) Qureshi achieves, it is nevertheless fitting for his works.

The method of repeating a format in one painting, as practiced with the shirt in Fig. 121 and Fig. 122, is another way of demonstrating joy with multiple messages. The stylistic trait of

³⁰⁸Salima Hashmi, "Radicalising tradition", *Artlink Australia*, Vol. 20, Issue 20, p. 33.

³⁰⁹Salima Hashmi, *The Eye Still Seeks: Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, exhibition catalogue, (Sidney: Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 2001), N.pag.

³¹⁰When Qureshi prepared his own wasli he would substitute the last layer of paper he pasted on the other layers with a leaf from an old book.

³¹¹Marie L. Swietochowski, "Decorative Borders in Mughal Albums", op. cit., p.45.

³¹²Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, (London: The British Library, 1982), p. 79.

repetition is reminiscent to Kangra painting, where due to lyrics and narratives, the same figure can appear several times at different points in a painting.

While the mirror-image of the shirt appears as its underlying structure, as suggested by its geometrical grid format and its tailoring manual, it also emphasises controversies on originality and copy, modernity and traditions, reality and fiction, and past and present. What we see on the surface contains multiple layers. The way Qureshi exhibits the shirt in his painting is reminiscent of the kind of folklore presentation seen in museums. The Lahore museum, situated next to the National College of Arts, displays a number of crafts and traditional cloths in the same manner that Qureshi spreads out the shirt in his painting.

Qureshi's artistic vocabulary has been enriched by the nuclear missile ever since the country—after having successfully tested its nuclear potency in May 1998—started to decorate public places with this powerful weapon. The intention was a capacity for an intact defence, as Pakistan has demonstrated after more than fifty years of conflict with India since Partition. Besides the political act of boasting its military power, it is somehow striking to encounter these phallic symbols as prevailing public-art monuments in a country whose culture is disinclined by sculptural representation. With irony and humour, Qureshi manages to comment on this socio-political scenario. Virginia Whiles's remark is to the point when she draws comparisons between the weapon that has become a public symbol and the one that Qureshi depicts in his paintings: "In Qureshi's idyllic landscapes, these same rockets materialise out of the mists: garlanded by mango leaves or spattered with sperm-like fall-out."³¹³ In view of the defence policy on both sides of the border (Pakistan's and India's) around the time this painting was made, the issue of nuclear arms has been revived not only on the political agenda of both ruling parties, but also in the international media. Horrific scenarios of the estimated loss of life that would follow a nuclear catastrophe filled the front pages of newspapers around the globe in the initial months of 2002. While Qureshi's missiles are less dangerous, they are nevertheless treated with respect: A tribute that would have normally been paid to a Mughal emperor has been directed towards a weapon.

Whiles speaks of the "tragic-comical nature"³¹⁴ that Qureshi stresses as being nestled in a symbiosis between Qureshi's personal understanding and a subtle comment on political

³¹³Virginia Whiles, unpublished paper, "Miniature Painting in Pakistan Today: 'Authenticity' for Whom?", conference on The Politics of Authenticity in Indian Art, Paris, February 2001.

³¹⁴Virginia Whiles, Manoeuvring Miniatures: Contemporary Art from Pakistan, op. cit., p. 12.

issues.³¹⁵ The missile in Fig. 123 is drawn with sensitivity, yet simple and straight lines give the weapon an almost three-dimensional appearance. Set on a pedestal of leaves—reminiscent of the leaves derived from Mankot, Kangra, Guler, and Basohli paintings—the top part of the weapon is adorned by raindrops that appear as dotted strings. Fig 124 shows the same form of rain from an eighteenth century Mandi painting.

There is another double-projection Qureshi painted that has a certain sense of irony: In A Lover Waiting for his Beloved (Fig. 125), he articulates an issue close to his heart. The idea behind this subject is similar to Kangra painting, particularly to the many romantic depictions of Krishna and Radha. “The emotional range of passion aroused by a lover...(and) the intensity of love in separation”³¹⁶ are among the different subject matters of Pahari painting that are widely inspired from the great tradition of romantic literature.³¹⁷ The colours blue and orange are related to Krishna, whose blue-coloured shape makes him easy to spot. Qureshi again uses landscape reminiscent of the Pahari region to create a diverse composition. The dotted rain is coming down lightly, sparing the tree on the left in order not to ruin the minute details that the artist laboriously invested in his work. The painting appears as a cut-out from a larger composition, captured within a circle. The horizon slightly reminds us of a Mughal world landscape, giving way to a bird’s-eye view and therefore achieving aerial perspective.³¹⁸ Qureshi rectifies this notion of three-dimensionality by using strings of rain and by placating the interplay of landscape and body, exaggerated in the upper tree, which seems to grow out of the lover’s chest. The leaves on the right-hand side of the painting are very typical in paintings from various regions of the Pahari mountains, in particular, Mankot, Kangra, Guler, Basohli and Kulu, but can also be found in the Hamza nama. The willowy trees to the left-hand side appear, above all, in Kangra painting, but can be found in other schools in the Punjab hills, such as Basohli, Guler, Mandi, and Kulu.

One of the senses the viewer experiences from Qureshi’s miniatures is suspended timelessness. He succeeds in transforming this timelessness into contemporary idioms, while still maintaining a balance between the old and the new; the modern and the traditional. Qureshi manipulates images from various backgrounds—miniature painting, old text and script, film posters, and narrative—and he appropriates them to create his own language.

³¹⁵From an interview with the artist in May 2001.

³¹⁶Linda York Leach, Indian Miniature Paintings and Drawings, catalogue of Oriental art, part one, (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1989), p.252.

³¹⁷See *ibid*.

³¹⁸See Ebba Koch, “Netherlandish Naturalism in Imperial Mughal Painting”, Apollo, November 2000, p.32.

However, while he retains its traditional structure, he also introduces new materials, subjects, and techniques.

At the age of thirty-eight, Imran Qureshi has become one of Pakistan's leading miniature artists. He has proved that the miniature genre is wide-open, unrestrained by size. He has constantly shifted and altered the aesthetic features of the medium while still keeping the traditional format intact. There is no longer a concern that traditional materials are irreplaceable. On the contrary, newspaper and plastic sheets are whimsically affixed to wasli paper. Participating in a workshop in India in 2001, he enjoyed painting recurrent motifs from his own repertoire, such as landscapes, directly onto the tiled floor. Even though Qureshi's trees nearly blended with the prevailing floral motif of the tiles, at the same time, they risked getting washed away. The effect was wonderful and an altogether new experience for the artist.

Qureshi collaborated with Naazish Ataullah, a painter and printmaker from Lahore, on Raining Presents from the Sky, which revolves around the domestic craft of stitching. "Qureshi's childhood was spent in Hyderabad in Sindh, where the rilli or appliqué was a staple home textile. Ataullah's family traced many of its sewing conventions to the Nizam's court in that other Hyderabad in the Deccan."³¹⁹ A particular painting in the Padshahnama, The Delivery of Presents for Prince Dara-Shikoh's Wedding,³²⁰ echoed in Ataullah "memories of the khan posh, ceremonial cloths covering gifts at weddings 'to ward off the evil eye',"³²¹ as Salima Hashmi describes the artist's cultural underpinnings. Their collaboration needs to be considered in the context of the events surrounding September 11th, 2001 and Afghanistan in particular. Ataullah notes: "The parcels in the procession are in yellow, filled with rose petals, alluding to funerals and graves. You find traces of the petals in all graveyards, some fresh, some decaying, (and) they are a potent symbol."³²² Ornatly-embroidered silk parcels can be seen as a reference to the tradition of going into battle and being protected by verses from the Quran that are written on garments and carried under the armour.

³¹⁹Salima Hashmi, Press release "Threads, Dreams, Desires: Art from Pakistan", Shisha:The international agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts, Manchester, 2002.

³²⁰Agra, the riverfront, November-December 1632, Folios 120b-121a attributed to Bishandas, circa 1635. See Beach, Koch and Thackston, King of the World: The Padshahnama.

³²¹Salima Hashmi, "Threads, Dreams, Desires: Art from Pakistan", op. cit.

³²²Naazish Ataullah, "Threads, Dreams, Desires: Art from Pakistan", op. cit.

Hashmi explains that the “words, 'HasbonAllah' from the Quran,...translate as 'Sufficient for us is Allah',...(and) refer to a situation where Allah’s protection is sought...The idea of 'protection' is a loaded one in this context, since it alludes to protection from the Taliban and their brand of Islam. It also alludes to the 'gifts' that rain down on a hapless people. The parcels are ceremoniously covered with scrim, dipped in tea-wash, lined with crimson, which seeps through to the top layer. The palette is deliberately restrained, the embroidery and drawings limited and understated. Maps of Afghanistan are delineated, stitched and ripped asunder, pigments rubbed into the pliable material. Delicate drawings of idyllic trees are spread across the surface. All of these 'presents' are offered in a procession of metal trays, suggestive of weaponry or armoured vehicles.”³²³

Qureshi’s implicit political comments question the military intervention by the Americans and the West. In the shadow of food parcels that came raining down from heaven, the hunt for human life was in process. The work is informed by anguish, and the ongoing dispute in the region has not been regarded as being a part of the documentational character of the work, but has consequently and sadly become part of the context. “The devastation of the land in one place is matched by the will to survive in another,”³²⁴ as Hashmi aptly puts it.

Imran Qureshi’s later works—on a conceptual and symbolic level—have engaged the basic geometric grid underlying a traditional miniature painting. Inside Out (Fig. 126) (2006) is an example of this new approach with old devices. Fine details—hidden in a traditional miniature painting under layers of textured surface—such as the schematic structure with the normative grid-plan are left visible. The grid does not reference modernism, but rather the Indo-Persian miniature tradition. The thin parallel lines, drawn into a pattern of squares, reference Qureshi’s foundation-level studies at the NCA where, according to tradition, every student of miniature painting would learn to develop a high standard of control over the line through this process. While we can witness these fine lines in the top half of the painting, the lower half is covered, more or less, with blue, stylized leaves, blots, dots, circles, and lines, all of which have become a common vocabulary within his artistic language. These dots migrate into the outer space of the frame, which was traditionally consigned to the hashiya (border), and cross over to the upper half of the painting. At the same time, seams drawn in all directions act as a boundary between sectors, connecting the outer and inner frame; and the lower and upper part, emphasizing the fine parallel lines taking on different patterns. These

³²³Salima Hashmi, op. cit.

³²⁴Ibid.

digressions (as opposed to fine details) within the painting play against the historical mechanics of a miniature painting and make it evident that the contemporary artist is fully in charge of his choices in directing the outcome of a painting. This rebellious act of both using a tradition as well as turning against it creates contradictory impulses that the artist charges with political connotations; such as the patriarchal teaching of a meticulous technique through the rigorous copying of existing works, the creating of nationhood and a national identity, and the sense of creating political marginalization.

In a series of recent works shown at the Venice Biennale, 2009, within the group show, “East West Divan: Contemporary Art from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan,” held at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, Imran Qureshi goes back to his early artistic concerns. In a series of paintings entitled Moderate Enlightenment (Fig. 127-130), Qureshi picks up the figure featured in his earlier works, replacing the Mughal emperors with a bearded fellow in a shalwar kameez, a t-shirt, or a camouflaged army uniform. By doing this, he is commenting on the current international politics where every bearded man from Pakistan is assumed to be a member of the Taliban. However, Qureshi’s Taliban member appears in postures less threatening and more enlightened.

Imran Qureshi has become a very influential teacher in Pakistan. He has inspired many new miniature artists who, under his influence, follow his path of radicalizing the traditional content through a conceptual recovery of the practice.

4.17 Aisha Khalid (b. 1972)

In Aisha Khalid’s work, the central image is inhabited by decorative motifs, to the extent that patterning has become the major subject of her work.

Aisha Khalid’s capacity lies in her ability to create jewel-like interiors with interwoven geometric patterns, flowers, and women’s figures. Textiles from Mughal miniatures, Islamic tile works, and geometric arabesques become meshed together. Females in burqas do not immediately appear visible, for they have become a part of the fabric and interior. What

Khalid expresses by this is both very personal and socio-critical. Depending on the audience, the burqa can be interpreted as a sign of oppression against women, an indicator of the situation of women in a conservative Islamic society. However, women exercise a very personal power beneath their burqas. Because their gestures—their body-language—can not be seen, they develop a playful and, at times, very appealing game of hide and seek. Depending on what parts of the body a woman decides to unveil, she can either attract or ward off glances. Virginia Whiles sees the strong woman in Aisha Khalid's exquisite surfaces: "In spite of the pressures of purdah, the women stand resolute in their burqas, resistant behind their veils of roses and lotus blossoms."³²⁵ However, Quddus Mirza receives a different picture from Khalid's paintings and, as opposed to Whiles, sees the weak and disadvantaged woman. He redirects the situation of the veiled women back to the conservative society where they are "present but not seen and do not have their own identity. There the woman is viewed and expected to be part of her surrounding/home/family setup."³²⁶

Fig. 131 shows how Khalid tries to thwart three-dimensional space by using different patterns. Nevertheless, gradations of the shadow's shapes appearing in the corners of the architectural device suggest the basic relationships of form and space. Figures 132, 133 and 128 reveal how Khalid works towards the two-dimensional picture plane. In keeping with the formation of the shade, the white female figures (Fig. 132), delicately placed on lotus blossoms reminiscent of Hindu goddesses, initially appear as part of the picture plane but, after a while, seem to float almost illusionistically into space. Depth is not emphasized since the figure's sizes do not alter. In Fig. 133, she tries to obtain flatness by incorporating the two female figures in the pattern. In Fig. 134, she renounces three-dimensionality by viewing the scene from above. The geometric pattern within the circle is without contrasting shapes. The centre, reminiscent of a cast-off blue burqa, is displayed with the rhythm of a wave and interrupts the dynamic of the tiles, which scale down by moving towards the blue centre. The exterior boundary of the circle, where the geometric forms would have to become larger, is restricted with a fine and almost invisible curved line. Ebba Koch suggested that this composition could be a dome with a typical Shah-Jahani vault pattern.³²⁷ The four female shapes in white burqas are placed flat on the surface, regardless of existing space. This unnatural positioning of the female bodies growing out of the four corners of the frame takes part—authoritatively—in the two-dimensionality of this painting. In Fig. 135, she almost

³²⁵Virginia Whiles, „In and Out of Pakistan“, Third Text, no. 52 (2000): pp. 107,109.

³²⁶Quddus Mirza, „Of Missile and other Ideas“, The News 11 February 2001.

³²⁷From a private conversation with Ebba Koch, August 2002, Vienna.

succeeds in tricking the human eye. The group of women on the left-hand side of the painting appear only at second glance. The juxtaposing of two- versus three-dimensional space harks back to Mughal paintings where, especially during Shah-Jahan's reign, this principle was used in a very calculated way. Aisha Khalid uses space consciously when it is needed and sets it in opposition to the flatness of the various geometric patterns. What she achieves is solidity and volume in a two-dimensional plane.

Floral motifs and geometric tileworks not only connect Khalid's work with traditional miniature painting, but also create an association with local imagery—tiles and fabric patterns that are omnipresent in the many bazaars of Pakistan. For models of women in burqas, the artist does not need to refer to books, but rather seeks inspiration from what she sees every day (Fig. 136). The way these women sit timidly and with drawn-up knees, veiled from top to toe, reminds us of Khalid's figures. Nevertheless, the artist concedes to her women's strength and resoluteness.

The recurrence of flowers in Khalid's paintings harks back to diverse traditions on the subcontinent. One of the uniquely appealing Mughal contributions to the arts is the botanical and floral borders of books. Two reasons for this significant change in Mughal decoration have been identified by Robert Skelton. In the Spring of 1620, Jahangir visited Kashmir and was so taken with the blossoming flora that he had his greatest nature artist, Mansur, paint more than a hundred flower portraits. The second reason is the influence on Mughal painters by European-engraved herbals that have been introduced to the Mughal court with the Jesuit mission.³²⁸ This botanical trend follows the Mughal predilection for natural observation as opposed to the idealism typical of Iranian prototypes. Besides the vast use of flowers in the border works of albums, Mughal artists also depicted single plants set against a plain background. Marie Swietochowski explains that the flowering plants were eventually introduced in "architectural decoration (as in the carved stone and pietra dura work in such buildings as the Taj Mahal and Red Forts in Delhi and Agra), as well as in sashes, robes, metalwork, jade carving, and, in fact, almost every aspect of artistic endeavour."³²⁹

³²⁸Robert Skelton, "A Decorative Motif in Mughal Art", pp. 147-52, in The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), p.46.

³²⁹Marie L. Swietochowski, „Decorative Borders in Mughal Albums“, The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), p.46.

A great source for flower painting is the rich and opulent vegetation found in miniatures from Rajasthan and the Pahari region. The way Khalid places her women on the lotus flower in Fig.132 is a typical Hindu reference reminiscent of the representation of Hindu goddesses on the flower. After having received a two-year residency at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam in 2001, Aisha Khalid discovered that flowers were ubiquitous in Dutch culture. As a result, she started to paint single flower portraits, as in Fig. 137. This painting (still in process then) attests to the way Khalid's work has changed, as opposed to the previous images. She carefully separates the flower from the geometric tile work that appears almost minimalistic according to Western art standards. Single flower portraits are not uncommon in Mughal paintings, yet Khalid discovered this possibility for herself while working in diaspora and learning about the similarities between the host culture and her own. Because of this, she enjoys superimposing minute details on enlarged ones. Numerous visits to the *still-life* section of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has allowed her to discover that the Dutch still-life painters of centuries ago only achieved such great pieces of art because of their minute attention to detail. While in Amsterdam, Khalid challenged herself with books on tulips and neatly-decorated flowered wallpaper imported from England. She encountered the cultural gap between her own art practice—often misunderstood by other students partaking in the residency programme—and the contemporary mainstream. She also came to understand Edward Said's³³⁰ description of the "other" when she felt marooned as a Pakistani Muslim after the events of September 11th. Hand-made wasli paper was forced to make room for camouflaged army fabric embroidered with a red rose. The red rose has many meanings: Its beauty owes much to her work on wasli, while its sign of danger reflects the situation at her country's borders right after the American military response to the events of September 11, 2001. Aisha Khalid's pursuit of flowers in general and tulips in particular can also be linked to Persian and Turkish poetry where "the red flower with a black mark in the centre symbolizes the suffering heart and death."³³¹

The idea of dichotomy and the significance of the past (as expressed in tradition) has gained a new expedience in the work of Aisha Khalid. This is best expressed in a two-screen video installation titled "Conversation" (Fig. 138, Fig. 139). Here we see a very quiet conversation taking place on two screens amidst the noise of the making (and in particular the unmaking) of the embroidery. While one screen shows us dark-coloured hands (the artist's) carefully

³³⁰Edward Said, Orientalism, (1978; London: Penguin Books, 1991).

³³¹ Ebba Koch, The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), p. 140, 170.

stitching a rose, the other screen forces us to witness the violent destruction of the same skilful embroidery by white-coloured hands. By depicting the needle as performing both acts—the making and the destroying—Khalid is commenting on foreign intervention (on many levels of life) in her native Pakistan. Although this work was produced during Khalid's residency in Amsterdam and is a very personal response to what happened in America on 9/11 and consequently in Afghanistan, this work is also a response to her works on wasli and her entire engagement with a traditional medium. If one of the messages in this video work is that dialogue rather than brutal intervention is needed, then a second message can be seen as well: that engaging with tradition and engaging with one another needs to be carefully undertaken.

4.18 Working with Space

Aisha Khalid's busy paintings, once filled with colour and pattern, are now slowly being emptied. The oppressive veils, curtains, and walls which Khalid's women faced are slowly disappearing in subsequent works. Elements such as patterns, drapery, the details of curtains, and the drawings of flowers, still remain (Fig. 140). One of her early concerns—the relationship between figures and space—is now being replaced by an investigation of space and the very layers of that space. At the 2009 Venice Biennale, Aisha Khalid, together with Imran Qureshi, Khadim Ali, and Nusra Latif Qureshi were part of the group show, "East West Divan: Contemporary Art from Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan," held at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia. The exhibition was held on the building's upper level, which is made up of an enormous hall held together by contemporary scaffolding. Aisha Khalid's installation work, Face it (Fig. 141-144)), a collage of cut-out hand-painted gouache on wasli pieces applied to a huge mirror, emphasises her newfound style. Meticulously rendered details that derived from her artistic pattern repertoire have now been placed on a mirror within a huge space. The mirror is surrounded by white-wall panels onto which Khalid placed the same wasli designs. Moving a step beyond painting and decoration, the spectator is invited to consider the abstract elements that populate this space. Scrutinizing the painting's surface, one can hardly detect the traces of the painter's hand—evidence of her skill as a miniature painter and her loyalty to the medium. In this work, formal compositional norms of balance

and symmetry are directly applied to a space with a mirror in order to confront the viewer face-to-face with the medium. However, instead of offering glimpses of how the medium is constructed in terms of layers, as can be seen with Shahzia Sikander's approach in her installation works, Khalid seems to retreat to her earlier artistic concerns, where questions of veiling in relation to interiority and the decorative were explored.³³²

It would be a mistake, however, to see Khalid as an artist who simply relies on the safety and confinement of a traditional medium. Aisha Khalid instead uses these confinements to explore interiority and domesticity: By confronting the viewer with the mirror she makes it clear that from a certain enclosure no escape is possible.

As opposed to Aisha Khalid's cautious approach towards space, Imran Qureshi has openly engaged with space by incorporating the scaffolding-poles of the Scuola Grande della Misericordia (Fig. 145-146). He applies stylized blue-leaf patterns—reminiscent of the leaves he has used many times and which are inspired by Basohli paintings—over a huge dark-red panel precisely where the steel pipes from the scaffolding touch with the panel. From a distance, it looks as if the partly blue-painted pipes are dripping blue colour, but upon closer inspection the detailed flowers become apparent. The remaining colour, which is dripping towards the floor, is a reminder of the title of the work, but it also points towards what he, as a new miniature painter, has been practicing all the while: an interference with rigid tradition. This interference not only happens on a formal and conceptual level, but also on an ideological one. Qureshi's primary preoccupations of reworking the traditional format and investing it with political connotations are visible in all of his works. His allegorical gestures, as well as his comments on political tensions, power, and military abuses, are aspects that he directs towards these steel pipes. In their in situ works both Qureshi and Khalid have aimed to challenge space. They remain loyal to the miniature technique as a base but by using it on expanded scale they emphasize their intention to reconfigure an architectural space according to their rules suggesting a quiet invasion on a territory that is loaded with references to Western art history.

³³²In terms of a curatorial approach, Aisha Khalid's mirror installation engaged visually with Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian's mirror mosaic from one side of the space, and it engaged with his reverse-glass paintings on the opposite side of the space.

4.19 The Hybrid Character of Moghul Painting

Ebba Kochs analysis of and elucidation with Moghul art in general and Shah Jahani painting in particular clearly show that affiliations with European art were a conscious decision to establish a programmatic style of history painting. In her famous treatise “The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting”³³³ Ebba Koch shows that the basic discussion with European art in Shah-Jahani painting took on a systematic character. To put it in Ebba Kochs’s words: “Programmatic statements were expressed through aesthetic means; artistic style could serve as an interpretational key.”³³⁴ This was achieved with a systematic application of opposed forms – with two styles of representation. The formal and linear idiom related rather to the Persian tradition was consciously contrasted with illusionistic Europeanising naturalism in order to make a statement about the rulers ideology.

“The formal linear idiom stood for the power structure of Shah-Janani rule, for the forces that regulated the system. The use of naturalism was much more complex: besides expressing genuine aesthetic interests, naturalism had to grade strata within the power structure and identify that which was outside it; at the same time, it had also to support the system, permeating it subtly but thoroughly to give Shah Jahan’s ordered world the utmost appearance of reality.”³³⁵

Having said this Ebba Koch suggests that this systematic engagement with European art provides a precedence for the new miniature painters of the twentieth and twenty first century.³³⁶ The eclecticism and hybrid character in Mughal painting old and new can thus be seen as an inherent character with historical roots.

The works discussed in this thesis - dating from the early twentieth century until the early twenty first century - relating to or deriving from traditional miniature painting naturally share a certain hybrid character due to their stylistic relationship with the historical models or predecessors. New miniature painting by invoking history, by adopting different regional and international forms is responding to both local and global cultural, political, and social situations. This conscious developing of pictorial codes lead into temptation to compare new

³³³ Ebba Koch, “The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting”, op. cit.

³³⁴ Ibidem., p. 141.

³³⁵ Ibidem. p.141.

³³⁶ From a personal conversation with Ebba Koch, Nov. 1st, 2010, Vienna.

miniature painting not only artistically but also ideologically with achievements of the great Mughal workshops. Because it seems that “....the manipulation of antithetical modes...”, that was developed under sixteenth century Mughal painting “....to supplement, comment on and paraphrase historiography”³³⁷ serves best as an artistic tool to express contemporary issues. In that way new miniature painting from Pakistan as a rare species of traditional form and political content has the potential to spotlight historicity and move beyond hegemonic reclamation.

³³⁷ Ebba Koch, “The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahani Painting”, op. cit., p. 141.

4.20 Conclusion

Although Chughtai and the contemporary miniature painters draw upon the legacies of Mughal painting, the tradition of a so-called Islamic aesthetic does not exist anymore. According to Faisal Devji, an echo of the old tradition can, at most, only be found in the vernacular of certain art circles; or in the tourist-produced art and the kitchy objects decorating numerous middle-class apartments in South Asia.³³⁸ Devji also attributes the decline of traditional painting in the Muslim world to a colonisation of representation that took place in competition to Modernity.³³⁹ The method by which the tradition of miniature painting has been re-discovered and appropriated has had nationalistic notions. However, it can still never be seen entirely as a nationalistic undertaking. Neither can it claim to be an unbroken continuity with tradition. As mentioned earlier, what the miniature does in the work of Chughtai and the contemporary miniature painters is awaken the legacies of the Mughal painting—. If earlier, with artists like Abanindranath Tagore in Bengal, we witnessed a modern counter-reaction, we can now, in Pakistan, claim this undertaking as a very postmodern one.

If we appreciate the state of contemporary miniature painting today, we also need to acknowledge that the working background was established by the so-called pioneers. Shahzia Sikander's choice to train in miniature painting grew out of her desire to interrogate an artform that was regarded as antiquated and restrictive in the late 1980s in Pakistan. Her determination to make this her personal expression and carry it into the Western mainstream was burdened with many obstacles, which she playfully addresses in her early work. Sikander blurs definitions and binary separations such as tradition versus the modern, East versus West, vernacular versus fine art, past versus present, Hindu versus Muslim, and abstraction versus form. While critics have pointed out a clash of cultures in her work, Sikander herself addresses her work as reflecting the unreliability of translating cultures and languages, suggesting a sameness in this difference and rejecting total synthesis.

The work of a diasporic artist like Sikander must be authenticated through a more differentiated approach, which I hope I have achieved here. That shades of Eva Hesse, Nancy Spero, Louise Bourgeois, and others can be seen in Sikander's work is not so much the point.

³³⁸Faisal Devji, "Miniaturmalerei im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Künste", in: *Taswir: Islamische Bildwelten und Moderne*, (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, 2009), p. 45.

³³⁹Faisal Devji, *ibidem*. p. 45

What is important is what she makes out of her work—how she deconstructs and inserts it into her own canon to create a voice that has arrived on an international platform where she is part of a cosmopolitan and progressive art form that seeks to address an ever-wider variety of viewers, making them aware that the ruins of the past hold valuable information for the present.

In contrast to this, the new miniature painters' approach—by now positioned in and out of Pakistan—is less concerned with the conventions of the modernist discourse and more concerned with the loosening of the strictures of the Indo-Persian tradition itself. It should be kept in mind that Sikander's artistic practice developed in New York—one of the centres of the art world—while most of Qureshi's and Khalid's careers have been based in and out of Lahore, a place that has only very recently received international attention. Thus, their works have been exposed to very different audiences within a very different cultural context.

Working in the same medium but achieving completely different results, Imran Qureshi and Aisha Khalid represent the direction that contemporary miniature painting is taking in Pakistan. Their works combine the traditional medium with modernist techniques in ways which appear to reject total synthesis. They demonstrate how convergences between a traditional cultural heritage and postmodern-transcultural appropriations can move beyond the trap of the copy to reclaim the original function of miniatures—as chronicles of contemporary social, historical, and political issues.

Despite the differences between Shahzia Sikander, Imran Qureshi, and Aisha Khalid, it is important to summarize certain factors recurring in their works. References to the following are all very common: traditional miniature schools (Mughal, Pahari, and Rajput), historical events, techniques and imagery from Western art history, popular culture, collages, layering, juxtaposition and fragmentation of the narrative, and both celebratory and satirical moods.

What is it that makes this art so appealing to the audience? I believe it is the artists' choices to go beyond the nationalist agenda to develop a form that can simultaneously be about the past and the present, resisting the globalizing trends towards uniformity of expression and creating a personally- and culturally-rooted vision.

By tracing a trajectory of the miniature painting tradition on the Indian Subcontinent from its establishment via its various forms of appropriation—I hope I have shown that this genre can be regarded as an art practice within an almost unbroken tradition that has as much value today as it had in the past. Furthermore, I hope I have demonstrated that the region of South Asia (and the Pakistani conglomerate itself) has its own art historical development: Though at times it is more or less connected to other countries' art, it is nevertheless mostly independent.

5 Locating and Evaluating National Identity in Pakistani Art

Social upheaval raise questions of personal identity: Who am I deep inside? Which ideals do I safeguard or who safeguards them for me? Which inner contradictions are unavoidable; which social ones are to be resolved?

The creation or construction of a sense of identity is always at risk of turning into an ideology of difference. The problem with identity—according to the frequency of its discussion—seems to be bigger than ever before in modern times. Not only is this an issue in the postcolonial and Third World, it also seems to be an increasing concern within the growing European Union, where the collective feeling can not keep pace with its growth. Above everything, being a subsidiary country remains the motto for cultural politics and for conjuring an open identity where there is no space for antagonism.

However, when such identity questions arise, there is likely to be some disorder because “identities are constructed through, not outside, difference.”³⁴⁰ Protagonists of globalisation silently presume an increase of its process across all fields. Empirically, this generalisation can not be confirmed. If we attempt to glean an accurate view of this situation, we can find a great difference between the world of economics and the world of culture. Economic entities are tending to become larger and more global, while cultural entities are becoming more finely divided, seeking identity in smaller units.

Without making too much of a comparison between the founding of Pakistan and the creation and enlargement of the European Union, one can nevertheless say that the concept of identity-building has proceeded in the same way. Of course, there are many different concepts of identity and approaches to questions of identity are multifaceted. In general, the foundation for identity requires people, nation, community, class, territory, language, and other such elements. Questioning these totalities awakens the “concept of Otherness,”³⁴¹ which was played out successfully to a background of competing political and religious identities in the

³⁴⁰ Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs Identity?”, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay, (London: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 4.

³⁴¹ Ticio Escobar, “Identity and Myth Today”, *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 146.

movement for Pakistan prior to Partition. With the emergence of an independent Pakistan, nationalism was far from triumphing over ethnic and communal identities. Welding together diverse peoples into a sense of nationhood on both sides of the newly-created border was a task that had to be fulfilled. The nationalist project was, therefore, far from being completed, but rather in its infancy for both India and Pakistan, as Dr. Ambedkar, the Untouchable Leader, acknowledged on the eve of drafting India's 1950 constitution. "In believing that we are a nation, we are chasing a great delusion," he declared. "We can only attempt to become a nation in the making."³⁴²

5.1 Nationalism and Identity

The issue of identity in Pakistani art—signs of place and belonging—was tackled from the very beginning. Since then it has been a topic of continuous interest for artists. It can be seen as a reasonable obsession since artists have had to constantly define their specificity and justify their image, not only vis-à-vis its neighbour, India, but also vis-à-vis other powerful foreign models. Pakistani culture was artificially imposed on a group of people thrown together in a territory where a shared history, ancestry, and language had yet to be established. In fact, the only real bond among the people of Pakistan was Islam.

5.2 Lollywood and National Identity

A useful tool to promote Pakistani culture was the Urdu cinema, based in Lahore. Such films as "Shaheed" or "Farangi," which deal with the anti-colonial struggle, or "Anarkali," which refers to the Mughal era, were clearly made to enhance a feeling for a national cultural identity. Moreover, the medium was used by politicians as a tool for propaganda, mostly during the early martial-law regime of Ayub Khan (r. 1958-1969). Documentaries were produced to popularise the regime. The most famous project was Nai Kiran (A New Ray of Light), produced in the five major languages of Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, Sindhi, and Bengali. Ayub Khan himself was presented in the documentary as a figure who removes corrupt

³⁴² Cited in Das, A. N., *India Invented. A Nation-in-the-Making* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 8.

politicians and saves the nation. Nai Kiran was required to be shown free of charge by every cinema for a week.³⁴³

5.3 National Islamic Identity

The importance for a cultural identity in a hybrid nation like Pakistan was crucial but difficult to achieve. In the immediate post-independence era, Pakistan's survival was uncertain. While India had inherited the colonial state's central apparatus in New Delhi, as well as the Bengal provincial secretariat in Calcutta, Pakistan had to struggle with an improvised federal government in the provisional capital of Karachi. Whether Pakistan should be governed as a secular or Islamic state is still unclear and has caused many disputes since 1947. When Mohammad Ali Jinnah spoke—in his presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in Karachi on August 11, 1947—of the freedom of faith and of his belief in a nation where Muslims and Hindus would cease to be bound in any political sense,³⁴⁴ he aimed high: Politicians would soon interpret the founder of Pakistan as a zealot. Under Pakistan's second period of martial law in 1977, Zia-ul-Haq plunged the country into Islamisation. However, in establishing a national identity Zia's religious policies failed just as Bhutto's populism or Ayub's attempt at modernisation had failed. Moreover, the Islamisation resulted in sectarian division followed by violence from which the country is still suffering today. Zia failed to recognise that Pakistan was made up of a cultural pluralism that is also inherent in the rich heritage of South Asian Islam. Islamic expression in Pakistan was anything but monochromatic. Besides the Sunni-Shia sects, there was Zia's puritanical Deobandi sect, politically active as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-I-Islam party, which rivalled descendants of the Sufi saints of the region who gathered as the Barlevi movement and formed the political party of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-I-Pakistan. While "sufism had always been an integral component of regional cultural identity"³⁴⁵ the minority of Shias questioned Sunni interpretation in the process of introducing Islamic laws. The impact of Islamisation consequently resulted in a backlash on rights for women and non-Muslims and—in a wider context—impacted the freedom of art-making. General Zia ul Haq's intention to form a national Islamic identity

³⁴³ On Cinema see: M. Gazdar, *Pakistan Cinema. 1947-1997*, (Karachi: n.p., 1997), and Simone Wille, "Bollywoods erfolgloser kleiner Bruder. Lollywood oder Das Dilemma des pakistanischen Films", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Donnerstag, 31. Juli 2003, p.44.

³⁴⁴ See Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation*, (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 196.

³⁴⁵ Ian Talbot, *op.cit.*, p. 210.

conforms to Stuart Hall's definition of the strategies around constructing identities that "emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity—an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation)."³⁴⁶ The proclamation of identities as "unities" is in fact an over-determined process of "closure".³⁴⁷ Interestingly, Islamisation was ushered into Pakistan around the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Both countries experienced a closure: culturally, politically, economically, and socially.

Zia's policies consisted of a direct programme to erect a national identity using a conservative Islam. In consequence, and because identities are "constituted within" and "not outside representation,"³⁴⁸ the art scene of the country underwent dramatic transformation strongly shaped by censorship. In order to follow a pan-Islamic trend where the entire world, and particularly the followers of Islam, were persuaded to see Islam in a better light, calligraphy became the foremost state-sponsored visual art form.

5.4 New Forms of Identity

So how can we determine the cultural identity of an artist today? Because of greater mobility these days, most artists have left their country of origin at least once to either visit another country or, more often, to study post-graduate programmes, do a residency, or the like. Some have even extended that sojourn, as is the case, for instance, of Shahzia Sikander, who was born in Lahore and, since 1993, has lived and worked in the United States. That this is now more common for immigrant artists is also relevant to the issue of identity. Many non-Western artists now live in New York, Paris, London, and Berlin. Should they be identified with the culture of their native country? Should they be associated with the place where they live? Or should they be seen as part of a diaspora? If the answers to these questions are yes,

³⁴⁶ Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (ed.), 8 vols. (London: Sage Publications, 1996-2003), p. 4.

³⁴⁷ See: Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question", *The Location of Culture*, 10 vols. (London: Routledge, 1994-2003) and Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity in question", S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew (eds), *Modernity and its Futures*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).

³⁴⁸ Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (ed.), 8 vols. (London: Sage Publications, 1996-2003), p. 4.

and it may just be that they are, then it speaks volumes of the current cultural reality for non-Western artists.

Nowadays, many people are affiliated with a number of places and cultures and, as a result, they are able to make use of more than one culture. There is little meaning in asking whether or not an artist authentically embodies the culture of his or her native country. It is more important to ask what sort of new identity the artist is attempting to establish, or how much significance there is in his or her new form of expression or artistic experiment.

Such new forms of identity set the scene for exciting new art that can be appreciated not only in the global artistic metropolis (and in particular among transnational artists), but also and especially in emerging Third World cities. The Pakistani art that came into being in the 1990s addresses various experiences: alienation and integration, feelings of longing and belonging, memories of places and people, alternate political understandings of the world, and cultural practices that both divide and unite us. It draws on and speaks to multiple cultural traditions and attitudes; in some instances, using ambivalent, hybrid, or universalist forms, and in other instances, by giving voice to the specific concerns of local communities or pointing to existing cultural antagonisms. These artists address the vexing problem of pursuing our mutual interests as human beings, while still respecting the differences that divide us—even as they point to the practical difficulties of this ideal on the ground and engage overtly with the history and politics of their country.

5.6 Personal Identity versus Political Identity

Questions of how identities—personal, cultural, social, and political—are shaped, adopted, or articulated have been central concerns for artists in Pakistan. Although the younger generation of artists in Pakistan is less concerned with issues of identity, other artists are still at work examining concepts including culture, home, tradition, social change, and politics. The works of **Anwar Saeed** (b. 1955), **Bani Abidi** (b. 1971), and **Nusra Latif** (b. 1973) address categories of role and identity. While Saeed has chosen to address social and personal issues,

Abidi examines the making of a political identity. Latif, on the other hand, questions notions of power structure within art-making, combining this with her personal identity.

5.7 Truth, Memory, and History

5.7.1 Documentary Art and Interrogating Historical Records³⁴⁹

Constructing historical identity through the means of documentary-style artworks has been successfully reflected in a number of works by Bani Abidi. Her early videos ironically engage with the problematic situation of India and Pakistan. Abidi wittily points out the similarities rather than the differences that exist on both sides of the border between India and Pakistan. In some works, like Mangoes (Fig. 147), Abidi's figures have been stripped of all signs of nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, and gender, whereas in News (Fig. 148), the artist emphasizes differences like language, religion, and nationality. Mangoes (1999), Anthems (2000), and The News (2001) are all part of a so-called trilogy that explore the complexities of personal identities within the South Asian subcontinent. In all of these works, the artist projects her own body on two adjoining monitors. The effect is that the figures resemble one another far more than they differ. Abidi's videos encourage the viewer to think about human conflict. While she encourages us to forget, for a moment, the particularities that divide us and to focus instead on our common humanity, at the same time she reminds us that the cause for conflict lies in the politics of nationalism and national identity.

Bani Abidi mines history to comment on the present, but the past she retrieves is a shameful episode in history—the creation of a suitable past.

Can history be seen as a cultural simulation for political legitimacy? The praising of history was reflected on with disdain by dissident philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In the early twentieth century, it was Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno who, when referring to the past, saw nothing but a continuum of catastrophes. With exceptionally narrow points of view, sources of history allow interest groups to have over-protective and even

³⁴⁹Parts of this investigation on Bani Abidis work is based on an article of mine published with www.univeres-in-universe in December 2007 titled "Bani Abidi:When posing becomes intriguing". Parts of this was later published again in "Trumping History", Bani Abidi. Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009).

closed narratives. This mistrust of intellectuals becomes more blatant when pitted against the epoch-making abuse of history when it is narrowed down to serve the reasoning of the State. When the writing of history is based on the interpretation of transmitted documents, that writing is, to a great extent, corruptible.

“By presenting exaggerated scenarios of a nation which takes refuge in a selected glorious past, I hope to engage viewers in questions about the need or the extent to which we limit our identities,”³⁵⁰ explains Bani Abidi. “Her documentary-style works, ostensibly about history, are, in fact, deeply suspicious of history.”³⁵¹

“Abidi attempts something like a tightrope act. She articulates an ambivalent position when presented with an extreme political situation: for example, the construction of a national identity using mono-historical means which conjure up a distorted situation, namely the current “throes of a Wahab-i-sation of local Islamic cultures in Pakistan.”³⁵²

Abidi remains with the questioning of political constructed history thus creating a fictional trilogy of photo and video narratives. The Ghost of Mohammad Bin Qasim (Fig. 149), The Boy Who Got Tired of Posing (Fig. 150-151), and This Video is a Re-enactment (all 2005). In these works the central figure is the Arab General Mohammad Bin Qasim, who conquered Sindh (a Pakistani province with its capital in Karachi) in 712 A. D. Bin Qasim is often referred to be the first model citizen of Pakistan. The manipulation of history takes further course during Zia ul Haq’s³⁵⁴ process of Islamization in the 1980s, where school textbooks and nationalist novels were re-written to convey the message of Pakistan as a nation-state instantly and inextricably linked to the history of Islam. Abidi’s investigation alarmingly witness the consequences that the history, as written in school textbooks, largely ignored the civilizations, cultures, and religions that had lived on the subcontinent and that is now

³⁵⁰Bani Abidi, from a personal Interview, in Lahore, March, 2007.

³⁵¹ Simone Wille, “Bani Abidi: When posing becomes intriguing”, www.universes-in-universe, and Simone Wille “Trumping History”, Bani Abidi. Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009), p.25.

³⁵²Bani Abidi, from a personal Interview, France, September 2007.

³⁵³ Simone Wille, “Bani Abidi: When posing becomes intriguing”, www.universes-in-universe, and Simone Wille “Trumping History”, Bani Abidi. Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009), p.25.

³⁵⁴Zia ul Haq came to power in a coup in 1977. His oppressive regime reigned the country till 1988, when he mysteriously died in a plane crash.

Pakistan. This made the artist realise that students were in fact denied knowledge about a rich and tolerant strain of Islam as it was practised for centuries throughout the subcontinent.

“In The Boy Who Got Tired of Posing, three portrait studio photographs of young Pakistani boys dressed up as Arab warriors offer up an idea of how far this cult was exploited and carried into daily life. During the 1980s, it had become popular in the urban centres of Pakistan to have one's young sons photographed as Arabs. However, we are also confronted with a fourth image, (Fig. 144), which is a studio scene with a chair and an Arab dress on the floor, its temporary owner having hurriedly left the set.

For the role of The Ghost of Mohammad Bin Qasim, Abidi invented the character of Yusuf Khan. This young Muslim convert from Hyderabad poses in front of historical and contemporary Muslim sites all over Pakistan as a Don Quixote in an Arab dress carrying a flag, believing himself to be Mohammad Bin Qasim. In a series of eight black-and-white photographs of Yusuf Khan, the artist abstracts the emotions the State intends to foster by suspending the horse-riding figure slightly above the ground. By further manipulating the proportions, these constructed images do not so much stage history as mock it, ridicule it, and dismiss it.

Bani Abidi's work is imbued with her country's long-term and paradoxically short-term history, reminding the viewer that any reconstruction and revival of the past is full of pitfalls. It is too easy to romanticise the past and gaze back through rose-tinted spectacles, or to put a spin on past episodes to serve current political ends. Despite its documentary purpose, photography and video in Bani Abidi's work are obviously a provocative mixture of fact and fiction, where the final corruption through digital manipulation reminds us that the other corruption—a State-organized strategy—is a huge dilemma. Nevertheless, the solution may lie in the one image of the boy who, quite literally, got tired of posing: Here the artist trumps history and elbows it aside, destabilising it to remind us that we can still find strategies that object to a narrowed-down and limited collection of irrelevant facts.”³⁵⁵

³⁵⁵ Simone Wille, “Bani Abidi: When posing becomes intriguing”, www.universes-in-universe, and Simone Wille “Trumping History”, Bani Abidi. Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009), p.25.

“Through means of interrogating historical records, Pablo de Ocampo links Abidi’s work with that of Walid Raad and The Atlas Group. The similarities between their works lie in the way they both explore the trauma of history. However, while Raad’s projects are ongoing bodies of work, Abidi’s works are completed single projects. That said, both works are part of the prevalent documentary mode in much of the current art practice around the world. Successful work done in this mode relies on the subtle but direct questioning of the principles by which something—anything—is legitimized as truthful. Issues of truth, memory, and history ensure it is the categorization of people on a religious or cultural base which is constantly destabilised.”³⁵⁶

In the works, RESERVED (2006), Security Barriers A-L (2008), and Intercommunication Devices (2009), the artist’s “emphasis shifts towards an exploration of social separation through staged documentary and conceptual drawings, in part by identifying the prosthetics of power—barriers, intercoms, limousines and police escorts etc.”³⁵⁷ Security Barriers A-L and Intercommunication Devices are works that could be interpreted as the beginning of a documentation or an archive of a security mechanism that of gives order to things through the titles of their images, which consist of the exact location of the item. This strategy is taken further in the next work, titled Karachi Series 1 (2009), Fig. 152. These photographic works, clearly identified by their name, “can be seen as a form of desire to 'reterritorialize' (their) subject(s).”³⁵⁸ The notions of time is an inherent factor within the discussion and practice of photography and, as if to emphasize that, Abidi also provides the Karachi Series 1 works with the exact time and date. Abidi’s motivation here—as in her previous works—is to represent contemporary everyday absurdities. The Karachi Series 1 protagonists are obviously not coincidentally sitting or standing in the emptied streets of Karachi. These are staged scenarios and each image consists of what Burleigh refers to in Tillmanns work as “‘case studies', where the personal becomes the monumental” and the “narrative is about to unfold.”³⁵⁹ The staged protagonists, who we learn by their names provided in the work's subtitle, are from the

³⁵⁶ Simone Wille, „Bani Abidi: When psoing becomes intriguing“ in www.universes-in-universe, December 2007.

³⁵⁷ Iftikhar Dadi, “Introduction”, in: Bani Abidi. Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009), p. 2.

³⁵⁸ Peter Burleigh, “The burden of the moment: Photography’s inherent monumentalizing effect”, in Moment to Monument. The Making and Unmaking of Cultural Significance. (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), p. 186.

³⁵⁹ Peter Burleigh, Ibidem. p. 187.

Parsi, Hindu, and Christian communities. For these non-Muslims, the time of dusk during the month of Ramadan plays a significant role. These religious minorities are being put into the limelight in an environment which is not necessarily known for its acceptance of differences. At sunset, Muslims break their traditional fasting and consequently the streets of Karachi become deserted. These emptied streets are now being reclaimed by Pari Wania, Ashish Sharma, Chandra Acharya, Jacky Mirza, Ken DeSouza, and Jerry Fernandez. None of the protagonists look into the camera: They are all busily performing everyday tasks like ironing, arranging flowers, polishing shoes, and reading the newspaper. In another instant, the act of looking away could be interpreted as a protective measurement, but it obviously has more to do with their preoccupation with what the artist is telling them to do. Compositionally, all of the images are arranged to have the figure as a central motif being surrounded and circumscribed by walls (omnipresent in the wealthier neighbourhoods of Karachi), electrical wires, and, in the case of the image with Jerry Fernandez (Fig. 152) reading the newspaper, a crosswalk. The double irony in that particular image is that Jerry Fernandez, being a non-Muslim, comes out onto the streets of Karachi at 7:45 pm during the month of Ramadan to read his newspaper. He comes out when these streets are emptied of the masses and reads his newspaper, sitting safely on a chair by the crosswalk. Not that crosswalks are a guarantee of protection for the pedestrian in Karachi. Jerry Fernandez has placed his left foot in a relaxing and comfortable pose on the flower-beet separating the two sides of the street. The lines of the crosswalk on either side of the street meet up in the flower-beet—the so-called safety ground for any pedestrian trying to cross this street as prescribed. Jerry Fernandez's foot rests on this walled flower-beet as if to emphasize the continuity of the crossing, which is hideously being separated by the walled flower-beet. From this image, one could return to what Peter Burleigh calls the "reterritorialization"³⁶⁰ in photography. Abidi here captures moments that can be held responsible for creating a balance by means of metaphors.

³⁶⁰Peter Burleigh, *Ibidem*, p. 187.

5.7.2 The Many Selves within Anwar Saeed's Work

Incorporating minority discourses into popular areas of culture is one of the many possibilities within postmodern art. Postmodernism ultimately awakened the existence of otherness, the belief in the poetic potentiality of language, and the discourse in sexual and ethnic minorities. Not surprisingly, some of the more powerful voices in this discourse are from the postcolonial worlds, where a telling critique of a monolithic modernist discourse can be found. **Anwar Saeed's** early works were very much motivated by the political happenings in the 1980s. Furthermore, his paintings, prints, and drawings employ a carefully selected but wide range of cross-cultural and indigenous traditions. When the British painter, Timothy Hyman, writes that the works of a large group of figurativist painters in Baroda, India are characterised by spaces that are filled with figures, complex spatial arrangements, and bright colours,³⁶¹ one is immediately reminded of Anwar Saeed's works (Fig. 153). The artist has looked into his society's old conventional value system, where he finds that there is little concern for human nature.³⁶² He also criticizes still-common feudal values like honor and pride that result in killings. He thus links shame and guilt to taboos that are directly associated with religion and sexuality.³⁶³ These "burdens,"³⁶⁴ as the artist calls them, are among his major concerns within his work. Naazish Ata-Ullah has underlined "the compelling need to explore multiple dimensions of the self"³⁶⁵ within Anwar Saeed's painterly work. Thus, the multiple complexities of the body become his preoccupation when addressing boundaries imposed on categories of identity and personality. His heterogeneous visual imagery is connected to metaphors and symbols derived from text, myth, and mythology. Poetic titles such as Song for the Melting Ice (Fig. 154) are often intended to distract the viewer, leaving him/her with the task to decipher the meaning. This imposed barrier leads to multiple interpretations of the work itself, thus transcending the work of art and distancing it from its narrative.³⁶⁶

³⁶¹Timothy Hyman, "The Baroda School and Bhupen Khakhar", in "Art International", (Paris: Spring 1990), p.60.

³⁶²From a personal conversation with the artist in March 2007, Lahore.

³⁶³All from a personal conversation with the artist in March 2007, Lahore.

³⁶⁴Ibidem.

³⁶⁵Naazish Ata-Ullah, "Conflicts and Resolutions in the Narrative", in Hanging Fire. Contemporary Art from Pakistan. Exhibition catalogue, (New York: Asia Society, 2008), p. 55.

³⁶⁶See: Naazish Ata-Ullah, Ibidem. p. 55.

Stocky men seem to be cramped into the format of his papers to fulfill proportional measures. The outlines of these figures refer to their essences and build up striking points within the tense course of contours made up of straight lines and curves. These are abstractions of the respective parts of the body used precisely, deliberately, and with formal consequence. Set against the constructive effect of the whole is the internal arrangement with subordinate zones. Although his short-legged figures seem to serve proportional matters, they are a reference to marginalised ethnicities within the South Asian subcontinent—those coming from the southern or eastern areas. The soul and the body—detached from each other in Saeed's works—can be interpreted as a reference and a visualization of “the dual roles of the 'self' and the 'other'”³⁶⁷ as Ata-Ullah has defined it. I would also like to suggest that the artist is here inclined to symbolize the many selves rather than the other. In doing so, he symbolizes an inward kind of looking: Mankind sees himself and his approaching destiny. The artist's use of colour has been greatly inspired by the tradition of miniature painting. Saeed also incorporates and enjoys employing icons of popular culture, as seen in Fig. 148 with the buraq in the very upper right-hand corner of the painting. The rhythm of Islamic calligraphy and the mystical quality of Sufi poetry (and here he refers in particular to the Sufi saint, Shah Hussain, and his devotee Madho Lal)³⁶⁸ are part of the wide-ranging vocabulary employed in his paintings.

Anwar Saeed's engagement with language and identity allows him to depict the reality of marginalized people on a stage-like manner, thereby offering them a platform from which they become protagonists articulating received forms of identity as normative attributions. The complex contradictions of ethnic, sexual, and racial identities, as well as being defined and limited by conventional expectations, is investigated and addressed by the artist.

³⁶⁷ Nazzish Ata-Ullah, *Ibidem*, p. 55.

³⁶⁸ From a personal conversation with Anwar Saeed in March 2007 in Lahore. See also: Nazzish Ata-Ullah, *Ibidem*, p. 54.

5.7.3 Nusra Latif

The artist, Nusra Latif (b. 1973), has managed to successfully interrogate traditional visual strategies. The rigid hierarchy of Mughal pictorial representation is seen by the artist as an example of dominant power structures that she must challenge throughout her work. Latif has undertaken serious interrogation into the precolonial, the colonial, and the postcolonial context. Impositions of the colonizer are juxtaposed and thus layered with the contemporary abuse of power. Authority is left as a silhouette, as disembodied, and the resulting reflection of memory reminds us of a palimpsest.³⁶⁹ In Manifest Destiny (Fig. 155), the silhouettes of the two green figures are taken from photos of King George V and his Nepalese assistant from his famous and well-documented hunt in the Nepalese Terai region. Latif explicitly involves the medium of photography, which at the time of the hunt, in 1911, was used to present the triumph of the King over the powerful beast and the wild East. The tiger to the feet of the victorious hunter has taken on the shape of a rug, which is symbolically squeezed into a seal-press finely drafted in the form of a lion. The artist is referencing two contrasting symbols ascribed to the two animals by the Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, where it states that the lion's "overpowering brightness" is blinding him so that he becomes "the tyrant when he believes he is the guardian,"³⁷⁰ and the tiger "conjugates up notions of strength and savagery, signs simply of the negative."³⁷¹ Virginia Whiles sums up these attributes and refers them to political leaders regardless of their geographic location.³⁷² The orange oval to the right-hand side of the painting depicts a red lily about to explode. Concerning this, the artist says: "I am constantly reminded of the 'persistent authority' of the neo-imperial USA, intent on marking new territories as its own, insistent on bringing 'justice' to the world. How is this justice different from other 'justices' in the past? The beauty of the explosion is sustained by the beauty of the rhetoric; justice, peace and democracy to all."³⁷³

In many of her works, the artist has used the outlined image of Mughal emperors. By using outlines such as Shah Jahan's in Sites of Omissions (Fig. 156), the artist is referring to colonial

³⁶⁹ See: Virginia Whiles, miniatures pakistanaïses, exhibition catalogue, Maison d'Art Contemporain Chaillioux, (Fresnes: MACC, 2003), pp. 9-12.

³⁷⁰ Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 611.

³⁷¹ Ibidem, p. 1007.

³⁷² Virginia Whiles, Contemporary Miniatures. India & Pakistan, exhibition catalogue, (Berlin: The Fine Art Resource, 2003), n.p.

³⁷³ Nusra Latif as quoted by Virginia Whiles in: Contemporary Miniatures. India & Pakistan, ibidem., n.p.

and neocolonial practices of inhabiting other cultures, thereby controlling and erasing them. “Her drawing of a flower is borrowed from a Dutch 16th century botanical drawing, referring to the colonial zeal for documenting colonised plants and animals as well as humans.”³⁷⁴ Latif, herself living in Australia, deconstructs traditional imagery to get to the core and to build up anew from there through the means of collage and montage. Her focus on identity and dislocation become ever more apparent in her 2009 work for the exhibition, “East West Divan: Contemporary art from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan,” which took place as one of the many side exhibitions within the Venice Biennale. One of her works presented there was made up of 20 digital prints on transparent film, titled Did you come here to find history? (Fig. 157). This work was specifically done for the show. The title of the work refers to a process of self-reflection in art practice and to the artist's relationship with art history. Latif placed one of her own document-type photos underneath and superimposed it with several historical portraits from European and South Asian art history.

“The layering was not done randomly. I aligned my face and the superimposed face with one eye, so eyes or an eye is the sharpest focus in all the frames. For artists, the eye is both their vehicle of expression as well as their most trusted tool. Many of the historical paintings are considered captivating because of a gaze and the connection it establishes with the viewer. In my practice, I have found this connection very fascinating. Venice and its extremely rich history and its influence on art was there in my mind when I had to start work on this project. Art reflects on itself: Present to the biennale audience (was that) self-reflection. I was trying to touch on the richness, the layers and layers of living and archived history in that city and yet (also) the muddled grandeur of the architecture and life there (which I had not experienced first hand prior to the visit last year).”³⁷⁵

Examples of Eastern and Western portraits were thus layered upon the artist's face to refer to her own training in art. They were also there to comment on the political and social history of the city where the work was going to be shown (i.e. in Venice). “It was the 'inclusion' of the viewer through the gaze that I found most interesting to work with,”³⁷⁶ the artist has said. The overlapping of histories has been witnessed in many of the new miniature painters' work but in Nusra Latif's work, her own experience as a migrant has placed this issue in a particular light, which has resulted in a heightened sensitivity to processes such as displacement,

³⁷⁴Virginia Whiles, , Contemporary Miniatures. India & Pakistan, ibidem., n.p.

³⁷⁵From an email conversation with the artist in June 2010.

³⁷⁶From an email conversation with the artist in June 2010.

understanding, stereotyping, and cultural memory. How would the present be livable without the past and how would identity be possible without history? are thus questions addressed in her work.

Her work as a new miniature painter is an excellent example of how traditional visual strategies are being appropriated to create a space where old cultural titillations meet new temporalities.

5.8 Conclusion

Defining identity has always played a role in the work of Pakistani artists. Although it is not a major concern for the younger generation of artists, the works discussed in this chapter show that a subtle engagement with the politics of identity is necessarily taking place. What differs from the earlier generation of artists is that the younger generation is in a position where these discussions are no longer seen as heavy burdens. On the contrary, they are an opportunity to articulate the contemporary confusion of a country whose state of being in transition seems to be a permanent one.

6 Aspects of Popular Visual Art and Popular Culture in the Context of Fine Art

In the 1990s, a surprising amount of artists investigated aspects and adopted styles of the vernacular, or popular visual culture. They did so, most interestingly, as a means to examine cultural traditions, re-ignite old myths, and fashion new ones. Adopting culture-specific imagery, naïve styles, and traditional techniques in full awareness of their sometimes dangerous connotations, these artists nevertheless embraced these elements with purpose and without cynicism. In Pakistan, in the early 1990s, a group of artists explored the nature of the relationship between high art and popular culture embedded in an aesthetic debate with political overtones. Although stylistically artists like Ijaz-ul-Hassan and others, during the 1970s and 1980s, had been inspired by cinema hoardings and commercial paintings, they did not investigate the dynamics of popular visual culture in a broader sense. While Pakistan's elite and growing urban middle-class were flooded with Western consumer goods and media onslaught, the working-class culture kept alive what was being abandoned by the dominant groups. This emerging group of artists literally stepped into the homes of ordinary people, anthropologically and sociologically investigating the very definitions of culture.

The role of crafts on the Indian Subcontinent has become a broadly-discussed subject. In an international seminar held at the National College of Arts in Lahore, in November 2000, Jyotindra Jain expressed that “with the coming of the British academic art education to India, the concept of arts as different from craft began to emerge.”³⁷⁷ Industrialisation in the British motherland had awakened within its elite a celebration for handmade goods. Consequently, as Jain puts it, “the 'Indian genius' was rediscovered.”³⁷⁸ Fine arts, according to the British, never existed in India and it was therefore easy to establish art schools with a policy of training all skilled people who worked by hand. Because artisans could not cope with urban life, they shunned the art schools. Consequently, this brought about a division among those who

³⁷⁷Jyotindra Jain, “The Role of Crafts in Art, Architecture and Design: Education – Evolving Context”, International Seminar on Art, Architecture, and Design Education in the New Millennium, National College of Art, Lahore, Pakistan, November 9-11, 2000.

³⁷⁸Ibid.

attended the classes and those who did not or could not. Their work changed one-hundred and eighty degrees in the sense that they painted in studios and exhibited in galleries. This was contrary to the artisans and craftsmen whose methods and environment did not change as much as the nature of their product, which underwent a complete transformation commensurate with the change of their clientele from rural to urban.³⁷⁹ Due to this flexibility and the ability to absorb and respond to the changing environments, tradition is not a primitive world for Jain, but one with contemporary existence.

With regards to the courses that were offered at the initial period of the Mayo School of Art,³⁸⁰ one can observe that, besides their intention to preserve the indigenous crafts of India in general and the Punjab region in particular, they were also studied as research programmes and therefore became historical courses. Consequently, those artisans and craftsmen who continued to work in their respective domains underwent a transformation in the sense that they had to adopt new materials and aesthetic norms. Jyotindra Jain sees “a great apprehension in the minds of many practising contemporary artists in this part of the world (read South Asia)” and notices a fear “that if they derive inspiration from or work in tandem with the hereditary artisans they would not be 'modern' enough or that they would be dubbed as 'ethnic'.”³⁸¹ Nevertheless, we noted previously that artists like K.G. Subramanyan played an influential role in the discourse around the notions of the vernacular. Subramanyan’s main source of tradition came from the materiality of folk tradition. This was not meant to express a nationalist agenda or articulate a discomfort with Western aesthetic, as was the case at Kala Bhavana, the art school at Santiniketan. Subramanyan investigated environment and community—the vernacular—in order to find fresh and inventive strategies for the practice of art-making. He placed folk traditions in a modernist context together with irony, humour, and intellectual awareness. He also valued the ideas and forms emerging from the vernacular into modern debate. In that way, his approach resembled that of the modernists in the West. Subramanyan was aware of the advantage of a modern artist being able to choose consciously from a global cultural repertoire that included elements from both the past and present.³⁸² However, Subramanyan’s engagement with the crafts tradition went beyond simple appropriation and anthropological categorization. What Subramanyan saw in traditional forms

³⁷⁹Ibid., p. 3.

³⁸⁰According to archives, during the period of 1901 to 1911, under the governance of Percy Brown and Bhai Ram Singh, the school offered the following courses: lithography, modelling, perspective drawing, freehand in painting, freehand in brush, freehand from memory, sculpture, goldsmithing, silversmithing, woodworking, drafting, needlework, and miniature painting.

³⁸¹Ibid., p.7.

³⁸²K. G. Subramanyan, *The Creative Circuit* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1992), p. 8.

was the enormous creative potential it offered in establishing a personal language rooted in a particular culture that had its place in contemporary life.

A natural understanding of tradition and the vernacular as being a part of the contemporary environment had to arise slowly, since the first two generations of artists in Pakistan were burdened with a postcolonial identity crisis and the elucidation of the modern conviction/belief. Although artists tried to chart alternative courses to Modernism—like attempts in calligraphy, as well as Zahoor ul Akhlaq's use of traditional Swat carvings and various forms of the miniature tradition in his modernist language—it was not until the 1990s that a serious exploration and investigation of the popular visual culture was undertaken by a number of artists and teachers in Pakistan. In Karachi, Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, Iftikhar, and Elisabeth Dadi worked collaboratively with urban folk craftsmen, truck painters, and decorators and exhibited in Copenhagen and Fukuoka for the 1996 Tirenial. This made them the core of a movement that has strongly influenced Pakistan's art-making ever since. There were others, such as Samina Mansur in Karachi, who explored the possibility of incorporating popular art into her art practice. The artists, Huma Mulji and Asma Mundrawala, who were students at Karachi's Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture at that time, did not interact with local practitioners (as their teachers did), but were instead intrigued by the variety of unconventional material to be found at the local workshops. Thus, plastic, vinyl, and steel, became part of their artistic equipment; greeting cards, calendars, posters, cinema hoardings, and decorations found on vehicles provided them with ideas to indulge in new ways of making unconventional art. This interaction between high art and low art, with all its implications and risks, ultimately affected art-making in Pakistan in a serious way.

Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth became interested in truck art (and all forms of urban craft in general) when they moved from England to Karachi, Pakistan, in 1988. Karachi, then a city of approximately fourteen million people, housed some fourteen art galleries and attracted an art audience of only around three-hundred and fifty people. In an interview, Alesworth claimed that "we enjoyed the subversion, the affront to high art."³⁸³ Decorated trucks and other transport devices have since shaped Karachi's character. People travelling to Pakistan

³⁸³From a personal interview with David Alesworth in Lahore, March 2007.

for the first time are overwhelmed by the colourful and fanciful sight of decorated vehicles turning the whole country into a “rolling gallery”.³⁸⁴

6.1 The Tradition of Decorating Vehicles in South Asia

The tradition of decorating transport devices goes back to ancient Greece and Rome and carries on in Europe up until the late twentieth century.³⁸⁵ The tradition of decorating horse and donkey bridles and later motorised vehicles can be found around the world, although not everywhere with the same pronounced nature. The first colourfully decorated trucks in India, according to Grothues, appeared in the 1930s.³⁸⁶ Rich and Khan confirm this but point out that the first decorated trucks during this time were decorated for the preservation of the surface. “The painter’s role was largely to service the legal requirement that each truck carry the net weight of the vehicle, its legal payload, and vehicle registration number. The painter usually provided the name and address of the company which owned the truck, and frequently a salutation, such as ‘Allah be your protector’ above the cabin, or a humorous phrase or two, such as ‘Move your rattletrap’ on the tailgate.”³⁸⁷ This leads the two authors to assume that these early artists decorating trucks were originally trained calligraphers.

Today, trained crafts people can be found decorating buses and trucks according to individual customer requirements in specialized workshops mainly based in Rawalpindi and Karachi.,. The pioneers of the truck art business in Karachi, according to Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth, are Haji Hussain and sons, who in fact, were mural painters from the courts of the Rajas of Katch Bujh, which is located below Rajasthan on the western coast of India.³⁸⁸ Due to their background, Kazi compares the truck itself with the palaces of old times. What used to be available for the ruling class only—i.e. the craftsmen and the image itself—were now available to uneducated tribal truck owners. Kazi reminds us that representations of deer

³⁸⁴Jürgen Grothues, *Automobile Kunst in Pakistan*, (Suderburg: Schrader Verlag, 1990), p. 6.

³⁸⁵Joanna Kirkpatrick, *Transport of Delight: The Rickshaw Art of Bangladesh* (2002)

³⁸⁶See: Jürgen Grothues, *ibidem.*, p. 5.

³⁸⁷George W. Rich and Shahid Khan, “Bedford Painting in Pakistan: The Aesthetics and Organization of an Artisan Trade”, in: *Transport of Delight: The Rickshaw Art of Bangladesh*, op. cit., p. First published in *Journal of American Folklore*, 93: 257-295, 1980;

³⁸⁸Durriya Kazi, “Seven ways to Fold a Betel-Leaf. Our Living Past”, from an unpublished paper, Karachi, May, 2001, p 5. David Alesworth has also talked to me about this in a personal conversation in Lahore, March, 2007.

hunting, falconry, travels to far-off places, and images of power and pride, are reflections not only of the interests of an upper class but of a nostalgia tracing back to classical Urdu poetry. Kazi goes so far as to compare the truck's cab with the king's throne room and alludes to the structure above it as the jharoka. "The Palace became accessible to the new 'King of the Road' as is often written on vehicles."³⁸⁹

The decoration of vehicles in Pakistan has taken on such a dimension in the past fifty to sixty years that one can truly speak of a new vernacular art. Whereas traditional vehicles such as tongas and wagons are adorned with geometric designs and only rarely feature pictorial representation, trucks are covered with paintings on all sides.³⁹⁰ Through their natural framing devices, the sides of a truck, jointed by vertical and horizontal buttresses, offer the perfect picture plane for images represented in ways similar to traditional miniature painting. Representations of landscape, nature, and peacocks, for example, exist alongside Islamic religious motifs such as famous mosques or national monuments.. Islam plays an important role in the lives of the people of Pakistan. The truck painter, owner, and driver express this religious devotion as a desire to be protected while travelling. Above the drivers cabin, we frequently find the depiction of a colourful triangle with a pair of eyes (Fig.158). This symbolizes protection from the evil eye. A favourite religious symbol is the Buraq, the legendary winged horse that is said to have carried the holy Prophet Mohammed from Mekka to Jerusalem (Fig. 159). This motif of a flying white horse with a woman's face can be seen in many variants on the streets in Pakistan. Besides religious, mythological, and contemporary images, trivial subjects are also depicted, turning these vehicles into an interesting documentation of a culture evolving and adapting to change and an artistic elucidation within the environment. While referencing traditional stylistic elements coming from the Persian and Indian miniature traditions, copies of photos, picture postcards, magazines, calendar images, and cinema/advertising billboards are also skilfully applied to the vehicles surfaces. These truck painters have truly developed an independent art form: They have expressed the changing socio-political environment and culture more profoundly and directly than high art has. Unfortunately, because of economic development, this decorating business might soon vanish from the country, certainly depriving Pakistan of a very particular cultural characteristic.

³⁸⁹Ibidem., p. 5.

³⁹⁰See: Rich and Khan, ibidem.

6.2 Layers of Lived Culture

The very layers of a society can be found within the pluralistic subcultures that define popular culture. Popular culture's significance is often expressed through visual art, hence its investigation must also be connected to history or, as Durriya Kazi defines it, to the understanding of the past.³⁹¹ The investigation of sub-cultures, the way Kazi, Alesworth, the Dadi's, and others undertook it, should be seen as a stark contrast to the revival of a past cultural practices, as was intended with the establishment of the miniature department at the National College of Art at Lahore. The Mughal miniature tradition, viewed as an elite cultural practice, was claimed by Pakistan's premier art institution, the NCA, as a way to glorify the Muslim past and hence create a sense of regional belonging. Turning to popular visual culture, one needs to define this in the context of Pakistan, which Kazi refers to as a "lived culture," that is defined by the people of Pakistan and survived by the "non-westernised layers of society."³⁹² Kazi then lists numerous examples of cultural practices and ordinary daily rituals that differentiate Pakistan's popular visual culture from industrial and postindustrial societies.³⁹³ Popular art as a term emerged out of these "homogenous mass consumerist societies,"³⁹⁴ a level Pakistan had not yet achieved. A variety of popular cultural expressions and practices—even those rituals deriving from courtly life or poetry—are expressed on decorated trucks and buses. Instead of a nostalgic investigation of the past, Kazi suggests we listen and look "at the lived practices of people who have not become culturally disembodied," hence to "find the way towards cultural authenticity and so cultural autonomy."³⁹⁵

How do we approach, in earnest, an intervention and investigation of urban popular art, or more precisely truck art, without being literal or descriptive? How do we approach what one sees out there, outside the studio? How do we interact with the divided city, where the divided people come from very different economic and educational backgrounds? How do we collaborate within these divides without being pretentious? Aspects of popular art were increasingly explored by artists in the early 1990s. Incorporating it into high art and forming unions between the privileged and the deprived, the artist and the artisan, is an exercise

³⁹¹ See: Durriya Kazi, *op.cit.*, p.1

³⁹² See: *Ibidem.*, p.2

³⁹³ See: *Ibidem.*, pp.1-9.

³⁹⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 1

³⁹⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 3

fraught with divisions that must be acknowledged and respected. The group of artists interacting with the city of Karachi was aware of this political division. By becoming active within this social reality, they realized their projects as their very own personal visions of a living past.

In 1995, David Alesworth's Karachi studio was invaded by drug addicts, who took everything. His tools, his casts, and his work had literally vanished overnight. This being the end of his studio practice, his involvement, together with Durriya Kazi, with truck art and truck painters began. Although Alesworth mentions his fondness for Gullammohammed Sheikh's and Bhupen Khakhar's work, their attempts to take on the urban cannot be seen as an inspiration for these two Karachi-based artists. The spirit of collaboration that grew out of their habit of working together in other fields, chiefly landscape design, was renewed with their growing interest in popular visual culture. These collaborative works were never intended to present a "respect for tradition or to preserve a practice." Rather, these collaborative works that centred around popular art became anonymous and created a sense of excitement that were far from being concerned with the self.³⁹⁶

"The collaborative works with popular artists have been a direct result of finding ourselves practising art in Karachi. Karachi is full of the activity of making, and making inventively, harnessing inappropriate technology to fulfil a perceived market need. ...This extends from the purely functional, such as an ice-crushing device, to renewing old objects and materials (e.g. recycling oil tins to make boxes or making old sparkplugs look new), to irrational celebratory works that are an excuse for decoration—an embellishment such as embroidery, shrines, cinema posters, or vehicle decoration. As artists, our art galleries are the bazaars and workshops of Karachi. We share the madness, the eccentricity, ingenuity with material, and particular aesthetics of these activities."³⁹⁷

The first and seminal project centering around popular visual culture and truck art was "Art Caravan," which took place in 1996. It was initiated in 1994 by Durriya Kazi who, together with her students at the Karachi School of Art (KSA), discussed the situation about art galleries and their exclusive audiences. Out of these discussions arose the idea of involving a

³⁹⁶Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth, "Collaboration." These quotes are taken from an unpublished paper, dated February 8 to February 21, 1999.

³⁹⁷*Ibidem.*, n.p.

broader public that would usually not have access to an art gallery. David Alesworth cooperated with Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi. A number of other artists, such as Rabia Zuberi, Bashir Mirza, Tariq Javed, and Moeen Farooqi, made contributions as well. With the help of truck painters, a Bedford truck was turned into an art project. After the truck was initially painted and decorated by the group of people involved, it was used to tour the country. It housed the KSA school band and a mobile art exhibition with works by the artists mentioned earlier. The truck toured for a lengthy period, stopping at various places. Posters with peace and harmony themes were handed out, and the tour exhibited art to an audience all throughout Pakistan, rather than the small percentage of elite society that would usually visit the few galleries in town. Simultaneously, a film was made of its progress.³⁹⁸

“In a way, the approach to this project shaped our attitude to subsequent projects, that of acknowledged collaborations and public interactions.”³⁹⁹ The social organizational aspect of the truck painters’ workshop is what started to fascinate Kazi and Alesworth. Working in a relationship with the popular artists clearly gave them insight to certain traditional modes of organization within a rather new trade. However, it also revealed that change, according to market demands, is possible and practiced. The artists were aware of Francesco Clemente’s approach to urban crafts people and chose to be very careful about acknowledging everyone involved in the collaborative project. This was something Clemente did not do and which had already become an issue at the time.⁴⁰⁰ “Art Caravan,” and subsequent projects, created much controversy in the local art community, though it was never really acknowledged.

The next project, Heart Mahal (Fig. 160), was a product of a collaboration between Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, Elisabeth Dadi, Iftikhar Dadi, and a team of craftsmen. It was shown in the “Container 96” art exhibition held in Copenhagen in 1996. In 1999, it was again shown at the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. The collaborative group in this project created a temple: A shrine-like space was lit up by 1000 light bulbs that sought to remove the barrier between art and popular culture. This was followed by Arz-e-Mauood (The Promised Lands) (Fig. 161) in 1997, an interactive art installation project by Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, and a number of popular artists, and was presented at Frere Hall Gardens in Karachi. The site, Frere Hall Gardens, was significant because it is visited by

³⁹⁸Most of the information about this project is from personal discussions with Durriya Kazi between 2001 and 2008, and David Alesworth between 2002 and 2008.

³⁹⁹From a personal interview with David Alesworth in Lahore, March 2007.

⁴⁰⁰From a personal interview with David Alesworth, April 14, 2008.

the people of Karachi, who go there to relax. Therefore, the artists could approach people from all spheres of life.

“The concept of 'Arz-e-Mauood,' or the promised lands, is common to all cultures,”⁴⁰¹ the two artists wrote in their press release. This concept, they continue, “can be interpreted literally, as in the creation of countries such as Pakistan, or it can be a spiritual state of being, such as the concept of Heaven. It can also be (seen as embodying) all desires and dreams—the desire for a better life. This (better life) could be (in the form of) material well-being, education, status, lifestyle, romance, (or) fantasy. There is an unspoken understanding that this is always elusive—beyond access—and can only be an ideal we strive towards. It is also perhaps one of the most implicit cultural dreams that is, though, rarely acknowledged—the basis for all advertising and economies. The dream is dreamt by all classes, all communities, and all nations. It is in this spirit that the artwork is conceived. The interactive nature of the artwork acknowledges the plurality of this dream.”⁴⁰²

While Arz-e-Mauood expressed a gamut of desires and dreams, it also expressed the desire and intention of the artist-initiators to challenge accepted norms of art-making, exhibition practices, and choices of audiences.⁴⁰³ What made this work so striking was the participation of the public, which would, despite its huge size, usually remain silent at common art events. Over a period of thirty days, several thousand people visited and interacted with Arz-e-Mauood.⁴⁰⁴ The artists themselves interacted with the audience for five hours each night. Frere Hall lawn was occupied by partially enclosed spaces, created by five canvas panels that measured 3 x 2.4 meters each. These panels were painted on the outer side and contained holes that people could stick their heads through to be photographed against the background of their favourite promised land (Fig. 162). The panels were painted by the truck artists and film-poster painters, Haifz Fawad and Saleem. A logo, “Arz-e-Mauood,” was designed and created by Mohammed Siddiq (Fig. 163). On a daily basis, Mukhtar Ahmed provided the service of embroidering this very logo as a decorative emblem with gold thread on clothing or something submitted by visitors. The truck painters, Yusuf and Sons, decorated and painted four metal trunks that were on display on the inner side of the space. These trunks were painted with emblems developed from the themes of the backdrop panels. Left open, they

⁴⁰¹Durriya Kazi & David Alesworth, “Arz-e-Mauood/The promised Lands”, Press Release, October 13, 1997.

⁴⁰²Ibidem.

⁴⁰³Compare: ibidem.

⁴⁰⁴This information was given to me by David Alesworth in a personal conversation with him in Lahore, in March 2007.

served as symbols as well as submission baskets. The wedding hall decorators, Tahir Iqbal and brothers, made the baroque-lighted gate (Fig. 161) leading to the inner space. The gateway on either side housed two panels that served as contribution walls from visitors. These contributions took on various forms, including life stories and photographs; some of these writings, in fact, turned out to be poetic expressions of people's desires and dreams, imaginations of a so-called promised land. The way these contributions were exhibited on the walls in clear and sealed plastic bags is reminiscent of the lotteries seen on street markets. Every night activities took place at the grounds of the exhibition. Poetry was read, popular songs were performed, and in the final week, an exhibition of art works by leading popular and younger artists of the city was put on display at the Sadequain Gallery, inside Frere Hall.⁴⁰⁵

The impact of Arz-e-Mauood (The Promised Lands) was enormous. It was based on the contrast between popular art and fine art, hitherto known and displayed in fine arts galleries and only viewed by an exclusive group of society. Now, however, it was taken on by a massive audience—a public that would not usually dare to enter an art gallery. As noted by Kazi and Alesworth, “The form of this project” was “intended to challenge accepted norms of art-making, exhibition, and choice of audience.”⁴⁰⁶ In both the physical and metaphorical sense, space can be given a new meaning through the following: Being burdened by violent inter-communal feuds, raising public awareness of the conversations about the dreams and aspirations of the ideal home in a city like Karachi, and living in a city that is largely populated by people who “live in houses built in dreams.”⁴⁰⁷; The terms “home” and “promised land” are thus terms expressing desires, particularly in urban-visual mediums such as decorated transports and cinema billboards.

It should be noted, however, that this work (and others) by Durriya Kazi/David Alesworth and Iftikhar Dadi/Elisabeth Dadi have some essential elements in common. They were all interventions into everyday reality that made one suddenly see one's surroundings in a new way. They brought about shifts in perception, making strange a reality that was taken for granted. One became newly aware not only of forms and appearances, but also of social and

⁴⁰⁵ All the detailed information about the art installation as such is taken from the Press Release, op.cit.

⁴⁰⁶ Kazi & David Alesworth, “Arz-e-Mauood/The promised Lands”, Press Release, October 13, 1997.

⁴⁰⁷ Quddus Mirza, “Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth: Homemade in Public”, in: Beyond the Future. The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, exhibition catalogue, (Australia: Queensland Art Gallery, 1999), p. 206.

temporal structures. Fresh layers of ideas that shaped both reality and the perception of it also came to light. Tapping into popular visual culture with its many vernacular choices, the crossover between popular art and mainstream art allowed social relationships and patterns that were usually left out of the discussion of art to be more visible. Galleries and museums, too, are public spaces and highly specific social structures. Altering the established conditions and relationships within and outside these spaces has thus helped a younger generation of artists in Pakistan do the same.

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVSAA,) where these artists (Kazi, Alesworth, and Elizabeth Dadi) were teaching was—because it was newly established in 1990⁴⁰⁸ and in its initial phase—not at all distanced from its pupils: On the contrary, discussions and outings into the city were co-operations undertaken between faculty and students. “A lot of the teaching was quite informal,” as Huma Mulji, a former student at the IVSAA during these years, mentioned. “The faculty would explore the city through us too.”⁴⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Karachi art scene in the 1990s was very alive because of these artists' intervention with the city, their work, and their peripheral activities around their work. There were other initiatives and attempts to create a vibrant art scene. In 1995, David Alesworth started the A.N. Gallery in a restaurant space on the Arts Council premises and managed to show works that would not have otherwise been taken on by the established galleries in town. Pakistan's nuclear tests and the resulting frozen bank accounts stopped people from buying art for a while and the gallery enterprise came to an end.

6.3 Conclusion

To summarize, as a group, Durriya Kazi, David Alesworth, and Elizabeth and Ifikhar Dadi led the way in tapping into the field of decorated transport and urban craft. The dialogue created between these artists involved others as well, and among those, Samina Mansuri (b. 1956) must be mentioned. However, this did not happen in isolation: There were other artists moving in the same direction in Lahore. Due to the extent of some of the projects undertaken, like Arz-e-Mauood (The Promised Lands), which involved the artists' own collaboration with truck, cinema, and other urban street artists, as well as the public and art audiences, these initiatives, despite creating mixed responses among the art circle in Karachi and Pakistan, were echoed far and wide. Some projects were even taken abroad to places like Copenhagen,

⁴⁰⁸The school started its informal courses in 1990 and its degree program in 1991.

⁴⁰⁹From a personal interview with Huma Mulji in Lahore, March, 2002.

Denmark in 1996, the Fukoka Triennial, Japan in 1996, and later to Brisbane, Australia in 1999.

To place aspects of urban popular art on a common platform with high art raises issues of what is within and outside the existing territories of art: It raises issues of collective and individualized expressions. Crossing these boundaries implicates shared worlds and divisions, community spirit and collective wisdom. Individuality is defined and inspired by specific social settings. The integration of urban craft intended to respond to and constructively assimilate the swift changes in social patterns, history, and the environment that Western influences have, largely, initiated. Furthermore, crossing these boundaries was intended as an attempt to take decoration and artisanship beyond the restricted frame within which it had hitherto functioned.

6.4 Pursuing Individual Careers

Both Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth have continued to teach and pursue their own individual art careers. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Alesworth mostly made complex steel sculptures, induction casts from an alphabet of wooden patterns, seeds, fruits, and local plastic toys. These were then zinc-coated and fixed. The sculptural aspects of his work has recently returned with the accelerating march of weaponisation in Pakistan. With the launch of Pakistan's first nuclear test, the prevailing public art monument has become nuclear missiles dominating station forecourts, roundabouts, and decorating city parks. In an activist approach, Alesworth critiques the concept embodied by nuclear weapons—their destructive character on human existence, nature, and culture. Alesworth has chosen the early look of nuclear weapons in Fig. 164, which he has adorned with a fanciful surface: the playboy bunny and the teddy bear. Ironically, both the teddy bear and the missile underlie the concept and mechanism of commodity production. The distribution of both weapon and toy—from the making of it to the distribution of it—undergo the same concept. The fanciful surface given to the missile reminds us of truck decoration and the aesthetics of the urban bazaars in general, scrutinized by the artist and his colleagues in their many interventions, projects, and

collaborative works. Here, the artist's interaction with commodity production can be read as a historical critique of its anti-progressive scope of human ambition. In that sense, this approach is anti-modernist: It is, therefore, a "rejection of a hierarchical internationalism in art, particularly that aspect which was a feature of United States foreign policy during the Cold War,"⁴¹⁰ as Caroline Turner puts it when summarizing the character of contemporary art in the Asia-Pacific region.

Alesworth has been cooperating with his former student, Adnan Madani (b. 1971), on a number of projects. In 2003, they set themselves up under a Moghul arch as the Pakistani Gilbert and George (Fig.165). Dressed in the typical shalawar kameez, the two protagonists lend themselves a business-like air, wearing black gilets (waistcoats) while busily preoccupying themselves with their mobile phones. This work seems to celebrate the universal technology that has finally reached under-developed societies like Pakistan, but it also localises and juxtaposes this postmodern trend with the Mughal arch, humourously reminding us that within the Third World, new technologies and industries co-exist happily with traditional cultures. To date, David Alesworth's work has been continuously concerned with environmental degradation and an enduring inquiry and celebration of the aesthetic of Pakistan's urban street culture. Painted trees, omnipresent in Pakistan's cities, have been researched and photographically documented by the artist for a long time and have become a kind of botanical anthology.

Durriya Kazi, as a sculptor, has returned to her primary preoccupation. Witness (Fig.166) is a work she produced for the special exhibition, Desperately Seeking Paradise, at Dubai's second art fair in 2008. This fragile clay sculpture—a father holding on protectively to his child—is about love, violence, and the destruction of the human body. Presented in Dubai on a special platform, the sculpture lay on the ground almost unnoticed, literally seeming to turn into dust. Commemorating the tragedies of war in general, this work is, nevertheless, also very specifically concerned with recent events in the region, where more than 600,000 civilians have lost their lives in a conflict that seems to serve no other purpose besides

⁴¹⁰Caroline Turner, "Internationalism and Regionalism: Paradoxes of Identity", in: Tradition and Change- Contemporary Art of Aisa and the Pacific, ed. Caroline Turner, (Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), p. xvii.

revenge for the deaths of the 2996 victims of 9/11.⁴¹¹ Kazi, herself a mother of two daughters, fuses her own feelings of love with those we desperately try to protect.

6.5 Institutionalising Traditional Art Practice

The role of crafts on the subcontinent has become a broadly-discussed subject. In an international seminar held at the National College of Arts in Lahore, in November 2000, Jyotindra Jain expressed that, “with the coming of the British academic art education to India, the concept of arts as different from craft began to emerge.”⁴¹² Industrialisation in the British motherland had awakened within its elite a celebration for handmade goods. Consequently, as Jain puts it, “the 'Indian genius' was rediscovered.”⁴¹³ Fine arts, according to the British, never existed in India and it was therefore easy to establish art schools with a policy of training all skilled people who worked by hand. Because artisans could not cope with urban life, they shunned the art schools. Consequently, this brought about a division among those who attended the classes. Their work changed one-hundred and eighty degrees in the sense that they painted in studios and exhibited in galleries. This was contrary to the artisans and craftsmen whose methods and environment did not change as much as the nature of their product, which underwent a complete transformation commensurate with the change of their clientele from rural to urban.⁴¹⁴ Due to this flexibility, and the ability to absorb and respond to the changing environments, tradition is not a primitive world for Jain, but one with contemporary existence, as has been proved by the artists in Karachi who were collaborating with artisans and crafts people.

With regards to the courses that were offered at the initial period of the Mayo School of Art,⁴¹⁵ one can observe that, besides their intention to preserve the indigenous crafts of India and the Punjab region, they were also studied as research programmes and therefore became historical courses. Consequently, those artisans and craftsmen who continued to work in their respective domains underwent a transformation in the sense that they had to adopt new materials and aesthetic norms. Jyotindra Jain sees “a great apprehension in the minds of many

⁴¹¹ See, Durriya Kazi, in: *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, exhibition catalogue, ((Dubai: n.p., 2008), p. 13.

⁴¹² Jyotindra Jain, “The Role of Crafts in Art, Architecture and Design: Education – Evolving Context”, International Seminar on Art, Architecture, and Design Education in the New Millennium, National College of Art, Lahore, Pakistan, November 9-11, 2000.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹⁵ See chapter 3.1, p.1.

practising contemporary artists in this part of the world (read South Asia)” and notices a fear “that if they derive inspiration from or work in tandem with the hereditary artisans they would not be 'modern' enough or that they would be dubbed as 'ethnic’.”⁴¹⁶ However, the collaborative projects of Alesworth, Kazi, and the Dadis seem to be less burdened with these concerns. In fact, by stepping into ordinary Pakistani homes, Alesworth and Kazi became concerned with locating authenticity within the broad contemporary society, as opposed to within the world of art history.

In 2002, the National College of Arts in Lahore set up a Master's programme called “Art Practice: Placement with Traditional Practitioners.” Although Durriya Kazi and David Alesworth had not been asked to contribute to it, they were on the advisory panel for the installation of the programme. According to Salima Hashmi, who served four years as the head of the NCA and is currently the Dean of the School of Visual Arts at the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, “recipients of visual arts training are relishing the engagement with traditional craft skills.”⁴¹⁷ This “fearlessness” in the approach between fine arts and “domestic craft”⁴¹⁸ is thus emphasised in the NCA’s Master's programme. This programme was structured to “encourage students to interact with the wider environment of the city (Lahore) and specifically to make links with traditional practitioners and artists who may fall outside of institutionalised art practice.”⁴¹⁹ The aim of the course was and still is to question existing distinctions between art and craft, and to learn the processes, techniques, and methodologies of traditional practices. Masooma Syed, a former MA student at the NCA, described the difficulties she encountered while participating in this diligent and honourable event. Having been born and raised in the city, and therefore having developed a natural sensitivity to her surroundings, Syed never thought much of an active and conscious interaction with contemporary, cultural, and traditional imagery, for fear of converting it into a fake, temporary, and tedious exercise. Her encounters with the craftspeople also made her realise the conflict that existed between the studio-based, Western-oriented art practice and the falsely-propagated, traditional crafts-as-alternative art practice. After returning to the college campus at the end of this adventure, she felt like a tourist that had visited folk events and historical sights, which made her think about the value of such an imposed practice.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p.7.

⁴¹⁷ Salima Hashmi, “Threads, Dreams, Desires: Art from Pakistan”, in: Art South Asia, exhibition catalogue, (Manchester: Sisha, 2002), p. 38.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Course hand-out, introduction. Unpublished

⁴²⁰ From an interview with Masooma Syed in January 2002 in Lahore.

What Masooma Syed questions is not the place and value of traditional crafts, but the misleading intention of an institution built on Western policies, run by faculty members with foreign degrees who do not harbour any sensitivity for alternative art. For Syed, tradition is part of the contemporary environment⁴²¹ and the young generation of artists in Pakistan are able to demonstrate this notion very clearly without having to be asked to.

David Alesworth's and Durriya Kazi's concerns lay with the idea that definitions of culture need to be redefined. Their art needs to be placed alongside the territories of anthropology and sociology.

⁴²¹Compare also with Jyontindra Jain, *op.cit.*

7 In a State of Transition

A Young and Thriving Art Scene in Pakistan

The rediscovery of the Indo-Persian miniature tradition at Lahore's NCA has attracted more and more attention, nationally as well as internationally, and has turned into a marketable cultural export. A lot of attention has been aimed at the revived genre. For a while around the turn of the millennium, it seemed that the revived art of the great Mughals was all that Pakistan had to offer. Established artists as well as young and promising artists who had no affiliation with miniature painting—except that they were also Pakistanis and had been trained and taught in Pakistan—started making works referencing that great tradition. Since the popular art movement has not been echoed so strongly—at least not within Pakistan's art circles—its impact has been less-documented and, at times, it feels as if people have forgotten what these artists in the 1990s initiated in Karachi. However, tapping into popular visual culture, decorated transport, and urban craft was not done in isolation: A number of younger artists both in Karachi and Lahore were moving in the same direction. Understanding urban craft in general, as undertaken by a few individuals in Karachi in the 1990s, led the way into the field where the barriers between high and low art still existed.

What has been significant for Pakistani art since the 1990s is a change in attitude among artists in general, and the impact felt by a young and thriving art scene who have influenced each other with their varied interests. Although most of these artists have had the opportunity to travel abroad, to partake in international residency programmes and the like, their home and place of work has for the most part remained in Pakistan.

Hamra Abbas⁴²² (b. 1976) is known for her experimental approach to conceptual art and the highly codified traditions of Indian and Persian miniature painting. In her installation project, Please do not Step (Fig. 167), Abbas creates a territory where art is rescued from the archives of sacred books and translation is mirrored in shades. A collage of geometric paper tiles reminds the audience “Please do not Step” upon entering the space. One's attention is immediately drawn towards the four paintings—executed in the traditional miniature style on

⁴²²Parts of this text on Hamra Abbas is based on my own writings about the artist published on various occasions such as “Lost in Translation. Hamra Abbas” in Love it or Leave it, exhibition catalogue for the 5th Cetinje Biennial, (Cetinje: National Museum of Montenegro, 2004).

handmade wasli paper—each positioned against a backdrop of double-coloured wall panels carrying text from both the Bible and the Qu’ran in English, Arabic, and Latin. Addressing various experiences of exile, diaspora, displacement, alienation and integration, alternate political understandings of the world, and cultural practices that both divide and unite us, Abbas’ union of sacred text and painting is about “re-fashioning experience...working through quotage, appropriation and wit.”⁴²³ Abbas’ move has been to enact the dialectic of the promises of text and, like Derrida, she is profoundly sceptical of the seemingly natural, finite totality of the book that stands god-like, to use Derrida’s phrase, “supervising its inscriptions and its signs.”⁴²⁴ The bliss of textual engagement is made possible in a space where sense meets nonsense and images meet text. Although this work has been shown twice in the context of war and insurgency, once in Kassel’s Fridericianum and then at the Cetinje Biennial in Montenegro, the work is more about consolidation and unification. It makes us aware of the sameness in difference and encourages us to forget, if only for a moment, dividing-lines, and to instead reflect on our commonalities.

Between 2002 and 2007 **Hamra Abbas** lived in Berlin. Within this new environment, Abbas advanced some of her initial artistic interests of exploring cultural ownership, stereotypes, and examining relics of colonial authority. However, Hamra Abbas also belongs to the generation of artists in Pakistan who evolved during the late 1980s and 1990s without any experience of colonialism. These artists, therefore, do not exhibit any of the cultural identity anxieties which haunted their predecessors. In this sense, Abbas’ works, Please do not Step, Lessons on Love (Fig. 168), and MoMA is the Star portray a buoyant confidence in relation to the world, without hesitating to juxtapose the past and present while endorsing the local and international.

In an additional step, the artist advises us to look closely at Lessons on Love (Fig. 168) and reveals how deftly interweaving lovemaking and hunting can be. Based on an illustrated book titled “Kama Sutra” (Lessons on Love), (Fig. 169), the amorous pair is shown in a howdah on horseback in the midst of a hunting scene. Far from being interpreted as banal sexual

⁴²³Ranjit Hoskote, “Subject to Change: Reflections on Contemporary Indian Art”, Kaptial & Karma: Recent Positions in Indian Art, (Vienna: Kunsthalle Wien, Jathe Cantz, 2002), p. 38.

⁴²⁴Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, translated by Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.18.

instructions, Lessons on Love, like Please do not Step, offers alternative ways of dealing with the seemingly apparent. Being amused by the political climate and the possibility of both love and aggression, the artist seems to suggest alternative ways to confrontation.

MoMA is the Star is based on the footage made outside the New National Gallery in Berlin on the last day of the exhibition, “MoMA in Berlin: The Art Event of 2004.” Through the eye of the camera, Abbas silently observes how the power and glory of one of the world's premier arts institutions attracts spectators in Berlin to line up for hours to view this great collection of modern art. In artistic terms, this work represents the “plurality of vision”⁴²⁵ of East and West, insider and outsider.⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, as the artist’s camera oscillates between the waiting crowd and footage of MoMA’s commercial self-representation, Abbas comments on cultural hegemony or, using the words of Samuel Huntington, “the distribution of cultures in the world (that) reflects the distribution of power.”⁴²⁷

Like other artists across the international spectrum, Hamra Abbas demonstrates that the art of appropriation and quotation no longer remain strategies of loss or mourning. Quite the contrary, her works constitute appropriation only to challenge culture in its own formal language.

Faiza Butt (b. 1973 in Lahore) has drawn inspiration from both the everyday (i.e. popular art and the media) and some of the technicalities subscribed to the miniature practice. Her early work was devoted largely to issues of gender and the multifaceted nature of religion and authority. After moving to the UK, her works still reflected gender identity in a culturally and highly self-conscious register, but they were now imbued with diasporic anxiety. In her early career, Butt made her own paper by layering tracing paper that was then passed through a press. The result was a translucent surface where the handmade paper was made to resemble the traditional wasli, which is the layered handmade paper used for miniature painting. Butt has since used polyester film, a medium that architects use for drawing. When mounted on to

⁴²⁵Edward W. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” pp. 173-86 in Reflections on Exile and Other Essays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 173, 181, respectively.

⁴²⁶Only that here, East is defined as the East of the Atlantic. Therefore, there is also a shift in the definitions of insider/outsider.

⁴²⁷Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 91.

light boxes, the artist achieves both transparency and illumination. Lately, the artist has also started to do works on paper itself.

In her early works, Butt investigated influences of the media on the everyday and on society in general. Now, being a mother, she has observed the media's insidious influence on her own family and, more precisely, on her own children. In *A Hero's Work is Never Done* (Fig. 170), 2007, five children point their weapons systematically in the same direction, the way it is done in computer war games and on television. In contrast to this fearless reality, stands the cosy background of a sketched landscape with willowy trees, a mill, and a river. Lorrain and Constable⁴²⁸ come to mind when gazing at the background and connecting it with the picnic-like context of the foreground. However, instead of a cosy "family picnic on a riverbank,"⁴²⁹ this scene is violently interrupted by a time-break expressed through a technical rupture. The roughly-sketched drawing is reminiscent of a study for a painting: It's like an oil on canvas coming into being in a time-consuming process. In opposition to this, the picnic scene with the five children is presented as a finished painting in ink and acrylic. The panoramic distance could be interpreted as the past—a time prior to mass media disturbances—when families would happily gather for peaceful picnics by the riverside. The picnic, which is more of a birthday party, has truly turned into a chaotic scene without parental guidance.⁴³⁰

Paper planes made of the Hackney Gazette and The Guardian refer directly to the present in which the artist carries out her motherhood. Huge birthday cakes, sandwiches, colourful sweets, and a rose speak of the remnants of a party gone wild. Disturbingly, within this chaos, "tubes of Savlon, E45 and bottles of Dettol are visible, as fetishes to ward off the evil eye."⁴³¹ The children's guns point out of the picture to the right, as do the gazes of the child lying flat on his stomach, the nude boy posing like a Greek athlete with the tablecloths tied round his neck, and the two bigger boys. However, the little toy soldier positioned left of the boy who is wearing a t-shirt with the inscription, ...ston zoo, along with the little girl sitting like "a mini modern day Olympia,"⁴³² are both staring straight ahead at the spectator. While the gazes of both the toy soldier and the girl are reproachful, the gaze of the girl is also reassuring that this is the future we are heading towards. As if opposing these nightmarish predictions, the

⁴²⁸See: Virginia Whiles, "Plumbing the Abject", in: *Parental Guidance Suggested. Works by Faiza Butt*, exhibition catalogue (London: Green Cardamom, 2008), p. 20.

⁴²⁹Ibidem., p. 20.

⁴³⁰The solo show in which this painting was shown for the first time was titled: *Parental Guidance Suggested*.

⁴³¹Virginia Whiles, op.cit., p. 20.

⁴³²Ibidem., p. 20.

children's weapons are camouflaged. Hardly visible, the sabre of the Greek athlete-like boy is drawn in a way that it melds into the sketch of the bridge. Similarly, the boy lying flat on his stomach is holding on to a drawing of a gun that fades into the riverbank. More visible, yet still not really identifiable, are the guns held by the two bigger boys. Their hands are holding on to outlines that take the shapes of weapons. The weapon's barrel in the girl's hand is decorated with what looks like calligraphy. Despite the chaos, the drawing is very detailed in the realistic sense of painting. As if contrasting this precision, the artist applies dot-like splodges of paint as gestural marks relating to abstract painting traditions of Western modern art. However, the distinct anti-painterly approach Butt developed early in her career is confirmed by her dedication to the line, although she occasionally wanders off the line. These splodges of paint also underline the destructive nature of this scenario: an anxiety of what will come.

In A Hero's Work is Never Done, Faiza Butt offers a variety of insights into her method of using images from the media, or photographs she has staged and taken herself, as well as making references to various art histories. With the ink pen, she creates images based on tiny dots. These dots reference par dokht, the technique derived from the Indo-Persian miniature schools to apply paint. Her deconstruction of these images (and the consequent appropriating process by means of a grid) relates to the labour-intensive minutiae inherent in the miniature painting technique. Her chosen materials—pen ink on paper and translucent surfaces such as architect's film—signify a certain withdrawal from Modernism into a private and personal domain.

Another artist from Lahore who draws inspiration from familiar images and ideas coming from mass media, film, and various art histories is **Rashid Rana** (b. 1968), who has lately turned into one of South Asia's most successful artists. Having been Zahoor ul Akhlaq' student, Rana was influenced by his teacher's understanding, approach, and deconstruction of Mughal miniature paintings. He was specifically inspired by their decorative borders, and the way Zahoor foregrounded its frames and used his typical manuscript pages (called the firman). Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq's obsessive exploration of the grid framework, inherent in these traditions as much as in modern art, was echoed in Rana's early work and is relevant in his more recently successful work. Whereas his early grid works were all about exploring the language of minimalism and geometric abstraction, art history, and language, his work in the late 1990s reflected his growing interest in popular culture, working with discarded fabrics,

and collaborating with billboard painters. “In its essence, the deconstruction of the orthodox modern aesthetic is the prime concern of my work”.⁴³³ Work such as What is so Pakistani about this Painting? (Fig. 171) demonstrate this preoccupation clearly. The negative reproductions of the baroque sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1857), “La Danse (The Dance)” (1869), are placed on either side of a central panel of stretched fabric with flowers. Although the fabric was purchased by the artist from a famous local market called “ichra bazaar,” it is most likely that the origin of the print dates back to the Victorian age and is now regarded or accepted as Pakistani.⁴³⁴ The Urdu inscription above the flowers reads, “What makes....so Pakistani?” and “Pakistani Painting” is written in the middle, in English. Rana, in this work and others of this time, plays out the subversive acts of languages and of appropriating art history as encountered through art history books versus identity politics. A lot of Pakistani art has been read through the lens of identity politics, whether an artist intends this consciously or not. This dilemma, encountered by artists throughout the Second and Third World, is handled ironically by the way the artist uses language. Because of the title of the work, along with the English inscription within the work, “Pakistani Painting” leaves the viewer and critic in doubt about whether the notion that a single identity is being staged here.

Another aspect is the range of sources Rana taps into. His work, produced in a workshop-like situation with a range of assistants, appropriates styles from cinema posters and public hoardings and is then contrasted with references to art history and classical Islamic texts. In This Picture Is Not at Rest (Fig. 172), Rana went a step further to investigate the role of Western media in documenting a war. Based on colour prints of European urban scenes that are cheaply sold on the streets of Pakistan to decorate people’s homes and shops, Rana creates an image of a Swiss-like lakeside view with its mirror images. He then manipulates these tranquil scenes by inserting images of brutal military actions, topping it with logos of multinational companies benefiting from the devastation when rebuilding. Nevertheless, the artist makes the disruption visible, the so-called unrest appearing twice, on both images, as if to remind us that confrontation in one place causes an often unexpected repercussion in another place. By distancing the document from the human tragedy, he is commenting on the mediatization of certain world events by blurring reality through the act of representation.

An issue perpetually addressed in his work is the notion of national identity.

⁴³³From a personal interview with the artist in January 2002.

⁴³⁴From a conversation I had with the artist in February, 2002.

Authenticity and ethnicity are addressed in works such as What is so Pakistani about this Painting. These attributes are among the criteria for locating Pakistan's national identity in artistic terms and from the point of view of a local audience as well as an international one. Rashid Rana's digital print, All Eyes Skywards During The Annual Parade (Fig. 173), questions the symbols of nationalism. From a distance, All Eyes Skywards During The Annual Parade represents an image of people sitting on chairs during a national day parade. Their eyes are collectively pointed towards the sky, where they presumably glimpse the national flag. Upon close inspection, (Fig. 174) the work reveals myriad tiny pictures—scenes from Indian movies. Positioned in a corner where one side of the image becomes the mirror image, Rana confronts us with the reality of identities that are constructed through difference, while at the same time reminding us of the sameness in difference.

Here, as in all of Rana's works, painterly interests join photographic and cinematic strategies of unfolding and suggesting narratives to create dynamic illusions of alternative worlds, recalling early Modernist synaesthetic research into the abstract relationships between stillness, movement, and vision. The co-existence of the variety of images from popular culture—layered, shuffled, and deconstructed in Rana's work—is proof of the many dichotomies inherent and operating within Pakistan's surroundings. Apart from his act of incorporating the many colourful samples of popular art, Rana is also constantly recording the changing facets of Pakistani culture through the power of the hybridised media that he himself, as an artist producer, is adopting wholesale.

Three artists, former students and assistants of Rashid Rana, should be mentioned here because they were clearly influenced by him and his mentor, Zahoor ul-Akhlaq. (It should be noted that these artists were also influenced by the language and imagery of popular culture, magazines, and advertisements). **Mohammad Ali Talpur** (b. 1976), **Mahbub Shah** (b. 1978), and **Ayaz Jokhio** (b. 1978) share a Sindhi background. Though their art practices differ in many ways, they share an approach to investigating the media's impact on society, as well as to the relationship between art historical references and the image in general. **Ayaz Jokhio** has worked on a series of works where he invited the viewer to study the relationship between the title of a given work and the image itself. By juxtaposing a small image next to a large canvas, the former provides information on the title of the work, and the latter (i.e. the drawing on the large canvas, grid, and text) becomes the focus of attention. Jokhio uses canonic titles derived from art history, such as Mother and Child (Fig. 175), and applies these

to contemporary imagery related to media messages on recent catastrophes throughout the world. The words popping out of the large white canvas, therefore, turn into icons that reduce the small image to a mere comment. This conceptual and ironic critique on hierarchy—painting versus title, craft versus art, and text versus image—reflects on an artwork's reproducibility itself,⁴³⁵ as much as it does on the power of printed words in relation to images. Reflecting the artist's own poetic background this, nevertheless, emphasizes the power of mass media, making use of both familiar images in conjunction with the printed word to subsequently create a picture of the world.

The language and imagery of the media world are key to **Mahbub Shah's** work. Shah experiments with the violation of images from the media in order to reveal their fragility. Although there is a long tradition of art and culture in Shah's work, one is reminded of the more recent works by Gabriel Orozco or Damien Hirst.⁴³⁶ In an untitled work (Fig. 176) that appears to be an assemblage of random historical architectural devices, the headline, "God is in the Details" is manipulated but legible. When looking at the totality of the paper collage, one is left only with the urge to trace meaning in its details, as is suggested in the headline. Within the boundaries of his experimental approach, one of the messages carried out by the artist seems to be that the world's architectural heritage is being shuffled, shifted, and layered in a way that leads to information and art being transferred to serve global market needs. "By emphasizing the role of process in their works,"⁴³⁷ as Eliza Williams writes about the works of Talpur and Shah, these artists—Rana, Talpur, Shah, Jokhio—open up a gate into critical thinking not only with regards to the media's definition of "our understanding of the world,"⁴³⁸ but also with regards to the roles of craft versus fine art, and, in particular, the way art is being marketed globally when coming from a Third World background.

In an early work, Shah painted nine versions of the Pakistani flag, the very symbol of nationalism. Mahbub Shah's flag painting questions one of the very symbols which are, according to Hobsbawm, "historically novel and largely invented."⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ See: Jean Baptiste Joly, "About Ayaz Jokhio's work", in: itled ayaz jokhio, exhibition catalogue, (Stuttgart: Akademie Schloss Solitude, 2005).

⁴³⁶ See: Eliza Williams, "off the press and pixelated: adventures in drawing", in: punctured and unravelled. works by Mahbub Shah and Mohammad Ali Talpur, exhibition catalogue (London: Green Cardamom, 2007), p.10.

⁴³⁷ Ibidem., p. 15.

⁴³⁸ Ibidem., p. 15.

⁴³⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition", ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 12.

Concerns about the role of consumers in the process of globalisation become evident in **Huma Mulji's** (b. 1970) work. Mulji is a Karachi-born, Lahore-based artist who was a former student of David Alesworth, Samina Mansuri, Durriya Kazi, and Elizabeth Dadi at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Mulji's work is firmly rooted within Pakistan's social and political environment. Her concerns with the audience are often reflected in her work and, in this way, her work can be interpreted as political. Her material choices, such as vinyl bags, plastic toys, acrylic sheets, and the like, may have been influenced by her father's plastic toy manufacturing plant and reinforced by her teachers' own discoveries of such materials in the markets of Karachi. Art Vendor (Fig. 177), 1999, a plastic-heart vending machine which itself sells art for a little money, demonstrates this notion clearly. Therefore, intervention with the city, its people, and its geography or geographical divide (Karachi's) have become the content of her work. Between 2000 and 2004, Mulji became interested in yet another divide—that of India and Pakistan. As a result, together with the Bombay-based artist, Shilpa Gupta, she facilitated Aar Paar, a public art project aimed at widening the viewership of art so that it could be encountered incidentally, outside the gallery space and across the divided border. Although parts of this idea seem to have stemmed from her mentors, it is less collaborative, romantic, and concerned with street culture and more involved with staging collisions between art and the real world in order to shed light on the sincerity and artifice of both. Aar Paar literally means “this side and that side,” with an additional meaning of “through and through.” Aar Paar is also the title of a Hindi classic film from 1954, directed by and starring the legendary Guru Dutt. On a variety of levels, the name conjures up meanings in Hindi and Urdu, common languages in both Pakistan and India. The division of the two countries has been re-emphasized, politically, for more than half a century. The constant dispute over the Himalayan territories and the nuclear posturing of both governments pay tribute to that. The locations of the project is significant: Karachi and Bombay, two neighbouring port cities on the Arabian Sea, indicate this national divide very clearly since the divide is nurtured by mutual ignorance and suspicion. Aar Paar was thus launched in 2000 with artists participating from both Karachi and Bombay. The artists themselves were not able to travel but instead sent art objects across the border, which were then placed in public and semi-public places in the opposite city, sometimes camouflaged among merchandise in a little tea shop or displays in a shop window. The art objects were thus uprooted twice, in the sense that they were taken out of the classic gallery space and then sent to an alien yet familiar place.

Aar Paar saw its second edition in 2002, soon after the war in Kargil and the genocidal violence directed against the Muslim minority in the Indian state of Gujarat. Less incidental and more choreographed, the conversation between these two cities this time was entirely based on new technology, both high and low. Artists from both countries either emailed their graphic and photographic scans or digitally created artworks to be mass-produced in the opposite city with cheap offset printing. The flood of cheaply reproduced copies of art were then distributed throughout the margins of the two cities, plastering walls in ways political posters do, placed within newspapers in the manner of advertising leaflets, or handed out to passers-by at train stations. In terms of content, the prevailing subjects of the works were based on the search for peace and understanding and the much needed conversation across borders.

Huma Mulji's own contribution to Aar Paar's 2002 project was a black-and-white photo-montaged composition of patterns inherent in many South Asian traditions such as Indo-Persian miniatures, architecture, tiles, rugs, and textiles (Fig. 178). The central image of Mera Ghar is a grenade that reveals an explosion of patterns in the form of symmetrical geometric forms. The border work consists of text, repeating incessantly "mera ghar" (my home) in thirteen languages that are spoken around the artist's home in Karachi.

Aar Paar's strategy was one of intervention. It staged quiet, unassuming actions practicing direct social activism rather than political art, which often merely comments upon a specific social context. By imitating and inhabiting commercial structures, it became useful as a social term: It was seen as a subversive model that offered both humour and hope to its unsuspecting audience, communicating sameness instead of difference across the borders.

Huma Mulji's position evolves from a deep-seated sense of self-doubt, but she does have a flair for comedy. Far from being sarcastic, there is an earnestness in the work that precludes irony and allows for the possibility that art may be redeeming and even transformative. In fact, the humiliation of travelling today as a Muslim is addressed in But What Is Your Country Madam? (Fig. 179). "Travelling once used to be interpreted as a magical journey of discovery, fantasy, and knowledge,"⁴⁴⁰ states the artist. Nowadays, though, travelling with a Pakistani passport has become a burdensome, time-consuming, and humiliating procedure.

⁴⁴⁰Huma Mulji, from a personal interview with the artist in Lahore, March, 2006.

The shower fountains used in the work are also referred to as “Muslim showers” and indicate the act of cleanliness, especially for Asians and Muslims after using the toilet. For Huma Mulji, the shower thus provides an apt and humorous metaphor for the inflexible boundaries separating the Muslim from the non-Muslim world, a ridiculous criteria used to classify human beings. “In this work, the water hoses are coiled like serpents and the shower heads leave the crevice in the suitcase that they are meant to sit in, as if in rage, or confusion, or released after a long imprisonment, to defy authority.”⁴⁴¹

The metaphoric aspect of But What Is Your Country Madam? is representative of Mulji’s work in general. She has often used objects and situations found in everyday life to stand for modern social and global issues. In her latest work, presented at the exhibition, “Desperately Seeking Paradise”, curated at the Pakistan Pavillion of 2008 Art Dubai, a camel and a suitcase take on the representative positions of questioning global entertainment and dreams of employment in Dubai (Fig. 180). In this sculpture-installation, called Arabian Delight, the artist continues her pursuit of the socially forbidden and repressed. The work raises many issues that point indirectly to the source of discomfort provoked by her art in general. In this work, she accepted responsibility for the death of the animal that was subsequently stuffed and forced into the suitcase, raising the issue of socially acceptable ways of killing and exploiting. “The suitcase,” in the words of the artist, “is reminiscent of the culture of khaypia’s, the import-export of contraband items through personal luggage.”⁴⁴² However, there is a scandalous aspect in this work. It is not only that Mulji has trespassed into a prohibited area of society. It is also that she has jeopardized the repressive social mechanisms that serve as a defence against reality. The reality disclosed by Arabian Delight is that promises and dreams are inevitably too promising and magical to be real. Hence, there is a recognition that societies depend on death and destruction; that our lives are finite and, at the same time, part of an endless chain of exploitation.

Huma Mulji in a series of works shown at a Dubai Gallery in 2009 under the title High Rise uses Pakistan’s omnipresent waterbuffalo to articulate contemporary confusion that her country is suffering from on all levels of life. As in Arabian Delight in 2008 the core of this body of work is built around two life-size taxidermied buffalos surrounded by photographs with the same animal in various and precarious positions. Where the life-size animals are being painfully squeezed in to technically precarious positions – one on a steel pylon and the

⁴⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴⁴² From an interview with the artist in Dubai, March, 2008.

other in a steel pipe - the surreal photographs are deliberately created in the guise of early instant camera technology. In Housing Scheme (Fig. 181), the artist places four water buffalos on top of a huge building. The propriety is a typical example of how the housing boom of the country meets agriculture and consumer culture, and how various cultural tastes overlap, where the boom of development creates truly visual nuisances. In this work, as in many of her works, Mulji depicts and portrays Pakistan's reality by recognizing good subjects in the everyday. The artist speaks of her fascination with the "incredible energies of low-grade technology"⁴⁴³ in her country. She goes on to explain how she is being inspired by "the daily wear and repair of materials in Pakistan; craft solutions to (an) otherwise sociologically, dead-end reality."⁴⁴⁴ In tune with this, she opts for photography that is not technological to its core. Colours and angles remind us of the early instant camera⁴⁴⁵ and the deliberately vague and photo-shopped placement of the water buffaloes on top of the run-down apartment block add to the overall character of imbalance within the image itself, as much as to the whole situation the photograph documents. Huma Mulji's use of the water buffalo in her sculptural and photographic work places her in line with a tradition that goes back to the 1950s in Pakistan, where landscape painting in the Punjab region became popular and artists like Shakir Ali used the omnipresence of this creator to give art a local character.

Adeela Suleman (b. 1970) is another artist whose work articulates the edgy relationship with technology that can be identified in a great deal of Third World art. Suleman lives in Karachi and is a former student of David Alesworth. She has observed social phenomena in urban Karachi, which has become her primary frame of reference. Economic, social, and gender inequalities are at the core of her sculptural works. In 2001, Suleman made an installation of a motorcycle workshop (Fig. 182 and Fig. 183) where she addressed the dangers women face riding on the backs of motorcycles—side-saddled for the sake of modesty. Suleman came up with a variety of inventions—accessories for women such as colourful helmets in an assortment of styles. By incorporating everyday materials from the street markets, she fuses the idea of mass culture and art; industrial production and handicrafts. Her witty approach never imposes a strictly feminist view.

⁴⁴³ Huma Mulji, from a personal interview with the artist in August 2009 in Venice.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁴⁵ Maha Malik, High Rise, exhibition folder, (Dubai: Elementa, May 2009), p. 3.

Naiza Khan (b. 1986)⁴⁴⁶

Some of Naiza Khan's early collages and video works draw explicitly from her own life and experience of displacement. Khan spent her childhood in Beirut, Lebanon. Shortly before the outbreak of civil war, her family decided to move to Great Britain, where Khan received her education. During that time—after being away from her homeland for so long—she visited Pakistan and began to rediscover her true origin. The social and visual environment of Pakistan fascinated her; it released within her a double consciousness which has since become a recurring theme in her (artistic) pursuit of the female body—a metaphor for cultural, social, and personal confinement. The gaze and perception of the other are therefore drawn explicitly towards the body and its form. After reading Edward Said, Khan also addressed political subjects, such as the *Intifada* and the civil war in Lebanon, in some of her earlier works.

Drawing has primarily been her focus. The linguistic minimalism of her texts reflect contemporary cultural and social aspects, yet alongside the image, these works manage to withstand claims to any absolute forms or definitive answers. Initially, text and image interrogate each other; the text usually taking the role of the interviewer or narrator. Frequently, text operates only as a title as the focus shifts toward the image. This emphasis on the gaze of the painter—penetrating deeper and deeper into the portrait of the model—manifests itself in the repeated engagement with naked skin and hair and fabric: those associative elements within the intimacy of any female.

Her works in recent years express the subtle feeling of inner tumult and bodily unease. The artist learned from Minimalism to pare her art down to the simplest component. Surrealism taught her to extract unexpected thoughts and associations and stage them in unusual juxtapositions. A fine example of this is in Homage to Hokusai (Fig. 184) (2000), which is an homage to the old Japanese master, Katsushika Hokusai's "Dream of Awabi", where we seemingly witness a woman amalgamating with an octopus. The image surprises and shocks partly by its directness; it expresses both a passive, melancholic-lustful suffering as well as an extroverted and self-confident presence. Art is never invulnerable to misinterpretation: With such seeming directness, Naiza Khan attempts a balancing act that establishes—for the artist

⁴⁴⁶ This text on Naiza Khan is based on an earlier analysis of mine about the artist and was published as "Layers of Time and Space" in Bare the fact. Naiza Khan, (Mumbai: Gallery Chemould, 2006).

as well as the viewer—a tension that signifies ethics, morals, the erotic, sensuality, cliché, and hierarchy.

Hair, including organically pigmented henna, works metonymically for the concept of “woman”. In 2000, Khan showed Henna Hands (Fig. 185) for the first time as part of her exhibition, “Voices Merge”, in Karachi. The artist stencilled the widely-used henna paste directly onto walls: Henna, or Mehndi, once served in old rituals and traditions as a means to cleanse, heal, and provide nutrition. Associated with femininity, it also brings together the vernacular, popular, and traditional. Today, such rituals are still very popular as a natural cosmetic application, mainly used to adorn the bride’s hands and feet at a wedding ceremony. In this act of decorating and desecration, Khan identifies a metaphor for staining: The very few visible body parts of the woman about to be married are strongly marked, emphasizing the contrasting hidden parts of the body. The artist compares the residue this ritual leaves behind on the skin to two contrary provocations: vulnerability and sensibility.⁴⁴⁷

The step from subtly drawing the female body—where lines point towards intimacy and domesticity—towards drawing monumental female figures with the popular henna pigments emerged out of the increasingly aggressive debate about different experiences of gender roles within the cultural context. This is an experience Khan emphasized by placing Henna Hands at different locations near the cantonment station and railway colonies in Karachi (Fig 186). In this neighbourhood, inhabited by the lower middle-class, Khan’s work re-confronted the public. Partly erased, disapproved by women as an audacious abuse of the female body, and ignorantly spat on with the blood-red *paan* mixture, the suggested march of women on the public walls of the city was received sceptically by a society in which the autonomous image of the woman in public is far from being taken for granted.

The exhibition, “Exhale” (2004), expressed the tension around the female body and its urge for freedom through physicality and emotion. From Henna Hands, we can find solidarity with women as symbols of a conservative society. Nevertheless, works such as Exhale (Fig. 187), Six Strands (Fig. 188), and Dream-1996 (Fig. 189) are significant as personal outcries not just against clichés and taboos, but also against certain expectations the artist encounters working in the Muslim Third World. Objects such as fashionable lingerie items and medieval

⁴⁴⁷From an extract of a conversation with the artist in February 2003.

chastity belts embedded with decorative ornamentation become fetishistic by means of an isolated and isolating representation.

Considering the cultural context the artist works in, the chastity belt also refers to a dark chapter of the European past. Synonymous with the sadistic oppression of the female body and a woman's feelings, Khan goes one step further with these works, commenting on control and ownership on several levels. The acrylic drawing, Six Strands, shows six threads in two different arrangements: one tangled up and the other demonstratively straight-laced, both lined up next to each other. A quick glance immediately elicits both identically-captioned sets of strands and corrects the structure as putative dualism, counterpoint, or adversity. Six strands are six strands, the artist tells us in her own words, even when the first impression is deceptive—a demand to question common, well-worn, and guided patterns of seeing.

In Exhale, a small watercolour with the subtitle, “the body is a complex thing, do we draw it as we see it, or as we feel it?”, an additional artistic question can be formulated from Khan’s greater body of work. In comparison to her drawings, the watercolour, applied on paper, gives the figure a certain immaterial transparency. This is counteracted by a materiality mainly achieved by the outlines of the body and the bundle of strings on which the figure is placed. The powerful body language—a seated nude, bowed towards the front, elbows propped up on the left knee, both hands embracing the head—emits a sensual nuance through filigree tones of red and ochre. The phenomena (absence/presence, perceptible/depictable) are handled in a pictorially dialectic manner primarily expressed by the shell surrounding the figure.

Khan consciously strives for styles, techniques, and motifs that elicit a variety of meanings the moment they are viewed from different social, cultural, and gender positions. Her own experience with different cultures has become the central point of departure from which she constructs her art, thereby forming a dialogue between her art and the physicalities of both herself and of the women in her cultural environment. By doing this, she raises awkward questions. Partly as a response to the military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, and partly as a response to the media politics ever since—which she finds rather deceptive—drawings and watercolours such as Six Strands and the series, The Sieve-II (Fig. 190), have investigated how the media has shaped our perception of the Muslim world. Information and memories ooze through the thin channels of the sieve-like blood, metaphorically dribbling from the subconscious to the conscious, claiming our thoughts. Instruments like the chastity

belt, the pharaoh-birth chair, and the sieve speak directly about current experiences of displacement, alienation, uprooting, social control, and suppression.

Another aspect subtly manifesting itself in Khan's newer works is her personal situation of trying to reconcile social, domestic, and family obligations with her urge to be artistically active. Works that were presented in Berlin and Stuttgart at the ifa-galleries in 2005 and 2006 deploy, for the first time, the straightjacket and corset. While a corset is being worn to give the torso a desirable form—for aesthetic or orthopaedic reasons—the straightjacket primarily serves to keep the body quiet and under control. The artist strengthens this tormenting feeling by insinuating two figures into the care of the straightjacket (Fig. 191). Back to back, exhausted by pulling themselves in two different directions, the images of the two figures serve to mediate resignation. In another straightjacket version (Fig 192) the ostensibly male figure puts his arms protectively around the female figure. The telescopic arms recall the wrapping that the figures had to endure within the straightjacket. However, the dissolved and rather loose parts of the lower body allow a sigh of relief, and the text—"bare the fact...bear the fact"—speaks of both confrontation and realization.

This double meaning bears the concise load of emancipation in the sense of independence—a general liberation from any condition of dependence. Artistically, this eventually reveals the next step: a headless figure, whose physicality and scantily-clad body—stockings, suspenders, and straightjacket—seem expressive and provocative, challenging the viewer to establish a meaning beyond the more obvious juxtaposition and contradiction. The reddish colour against which the figure is situated invites associations such as femininity, pain, and sensibility, but it also serves to fill the void of nudity in body and atmosphere. With 'straightjacket', Naiza Khan coerces the subject to compulsion, convention, and prejudice. The figures in Khan's new works always wait for meaning, and are eventually fulfilled with a yearning expressed by all her figures and their respective bodies.

The female body is clearly significance in the work of Naiza Khan. Despite her critical look at aspects of female being and desire, she does not adopt a model of feminist propaganda that insists on female independence and power. In South Asian cultures, the separation of body and mind is not as colossal as it is in the Western world. That said, working with the female nude within Pakistan's social milieu is automatically loaded with constraints. Naiza Khan

belongs to those artists openly giving themselves to this task—using the body as a point of departure.

More frequently, Khan has asked fundamental questions about the role of the body with reference to the tangible, personal confusion she has about the self and the disoriented, visual world. Perhaps it is the capacity of the body, as the last authentic place of action, to preserve the integrity and the identity of self-knowledge. Perhaps it is the body that contains the immediacy to defines the frontiers between the self and the world as the other.

8 Conclusion

Politically, Pakistan is a young country. However, by tracing its roots in cultural terms, I hope to have shown that the soil on which the country was created has a long and ancient history. The same goes for Pakistan's society, which is not quite as ancient, yet deeply rooted in its past and, at the same time, hit by modernity and the onslaught of globalization in a way experienced by many other Third World and postcolonial countries. It is precisely this contemporary confusion that artists in Pakistan draw inspiration from in order to create art that is exciting and relevant both locally and internationally.

In my analysis, I have paid particular attention to visual arts that are grounded in some way or another within South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular. An important body of the visual arts in Pakistan draws upon a complexity of frameworks that look back at sixteenth-century Persian aesthetics, regional Indian schools, and most of all, the achievements that the imperial Mughal workshops have fostered and cultivated. The influence of Western art has—since the establishment of the Mughal painting workshops in the sixteenth century—long been a part of the hybrid character of the artworks being produced in the Mughal painting workshops. Because Western art influenced art-making in Pakistan yet again in the twentieth century, soon after Partition, it can not thus be seen as an entirely new phenomena. That said, at a time when Pakistan was new and artists (namely Muslim South Asian artists) had troubles establishing themselves on a cultural ground where definitions had yet to be made, the reason these artists turned West for inspiration was primarily due to the fact that they needed to detach themselves from everything related to India.

The association of art-making with political lines was carried out by the neo-traditionalists in Bengal in the early twentieth century. The result contributed significantly to a growing Hindu nationalism, but also nurtured a growing Muslim cultural consciousness. The alignment between Pan-Asianism on the one hand and Pan-Islam on the other begat ideological battles that set art-making against political ideas, where the assertion of artistic and cultural authenticity was at the core of the battle. Therefore, the quest for cultural authenticity for Muslim artists (and later Pakistani artists) seemed to begin right here.

That fact that two of the major artistic trends in Pakistan—namely the miniature tradition and calligraphy—bear a Muslim background make it all the more interesting for an art historical investigation. This is due to the way the art world dealt with the constant dilemma of Pakistan's political configuration and its increasing alignment with orthodox ideologies of Islam.

When the creative possibilities of Islamic calligraphy were discovered after Partition as a way to create local Pakistani modern art, artists were mostly unaware of similar developments in other countries stretching from Sudan via the Middle East to South Asia. The demands imposed on artists during this time were very high: Specifically, artists had to find a way to dialogue with international (or more precisely Western) artistic developments, while at the same time, engage the truly local and native aesthetics that were suppressed under colonial rule. What soon made this undertaking problematic was the task put on artists to create an art form that would help define Pakistan's inherent search for a common national identity. Thus, calligraphy was held up as the official and state-sanctioned art form and Qur'anic calligraphy specifically, apart from the harmless landscape painting style, became appropriated by several leading artists during the 1970s and into the 1980s, when Pakistan became increasingly Islamic. Despite this "aesthetic complicity,"⁴⁴⁸ as Iftikhar Dadi calls it, describing Sadequain's public acceptance to the political environment, calligraphic modernism truly deserves to be looked at as an alternative to modernity and post-modernity. The coincidental and similar developments stretching across parts of the Islamic world recall an earlier Pan-Islam movement (that of the early twentieth century), although this time it was less about ideology and more about the script's inherent creative potential.

That the official revival of the traditional Indo-Persian and Mughal miniature painting practice happened at the time when the government sanctioned most of the country's creative endeavours, only emphasizes the national agenda of searching for a badly-needed national identity. Incorporating and upheaving traditional miniature painting at a college-degree level has a great deal to do with nostalgia for a pre-colonial past, but it is also about claiming the glorious achievements of the great Mughals as one's own cultural heritage. The Mughal empire—an Indian-Islamic imperial power—ruled large parts of the Indian Subcontinent from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The fact that the great artistic achievements of the Mughal imperial workshops are being studied and taught at Pakistan's primary art college, the

⁴⁴⁸ Iftikhar Dadi, „Rethinking Calligraphic Modernism“, in: *Discrepant Abstraction*, ed. By Kobena Mercer, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 102.

NCA, seem noble and unique. The contemporary dialogue with tradition and the appropriation of the traditional miniature, as much as using its style and iconography to express contemporary socio-cultural and political themes, are concerns and achievements that the younger generation of new miniature painters in Pakistan are engaged in. The groundbreaking works of such key artists as Shahzia Sikander, Irman Qureshi, Aisha Khalid, Nusra Latif, and Hamra Abbas, to name but a few, are examples of how traditional forms can transcend time and find new meaning within artistic practices that include painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, animation, and complex installations.

That the Indo-Persian miniature tradition has been influencing art-making throughout the twentieth century and all over the Indian Subcontinent has been shown with various artists' work in this paper. That India has never claimed any of the miniature traditions of its exclusive heritage has largely to do with the fact that India owns so many pasts and traditions from which artists can freely choose. Indian artists who reinterpret and appropriate aspects of the various miniature traditions have never (on an academic level) had access to proper education of the tradition's technique. In Pakistan on the other hand, this is a significant part of the curriculum of any artist graduating from the miniature department at the NCA. Thus, Indian artist's such as Gulammohammad Sheikh have focused less on the formal and technical aspects of the traditional painting and have looked more at its spatial concept and two-dimensionality—aspects that Zahoor ul Akhlaq became concerned with in Pakistan when studying Mughal miniature paintings in London museum collections. The hybrid character of the traditional medium, as well as its spatial arrangements and concepts, is what all the artists working with traditional miniature paintings are concerned with.

That the new miniature movement incorporates the aesthetic debates of popular iconography and contemporary cultural theory is what links both chapters. Concurrent with the growing new miniature movement in Lahore, the investigation of popular visual art and popular culture, and how aspects of these came to be incorporated in the context of fine art, was of major concern for a group of artists in Karachi in the 1990s. Tapping into the field of urban crafts helped people cross existing boundaries between high art and popular art, but also boundaries between classes that were common within South Asian societies. By visually opening up Pakistan's fast-growing urban landscape to a younger generation of artists, this movement effectively changed art-making and art-thinking in Pakistan. Works by internationally successful artists such as Huma Mulji and Adeela Suleman, to name but two,

are highly influenced by the ideas fostered and discussed by David Alesworth, Durriya Kazi, and Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi. While linking up with local practitioners became a main concern for these artists, their pupils, Mulji, Suleman, and Asma Mundrawala, found inspiration in the visual vocabulary and opted for an appropriation of the huge variety of material being used and found in the local markets. Thus plastic, vinyl, steel, cinema hoardings, posters, and truck decorations were applied to art that questioned established canons and came to represent the 1990s in Pakistan.

The selection of artists and artists' work in the chapter, *Locating and Evaluating Identity in Pakistani Art*, demonstrates that the personal is inseparable from the political, especially when being articulated through art-making. Categories such as social roles, cultural identity, and individual personality are addressed by Bani Abidi, Nusra Latif, and Anwar Saeed, who all work with different artistic mediums.

The final chapter, *In a State of Transition: A Young and Thriving Art Scene in Pakistan*, sums up the previous chapters by gathering contemporary artists who, in some way or another, connect with the country's art historical trends discussed here, or in an extended way, relate to the rich art history of the subcontinent while embracing internationalism without any fear of compromising originality. Art from Pakistan is characterized by the reality of a specific society, and the resulting dynamic is what makes it so exciting: Linking the past with the present is not about insisting "on one's own identity, history, tradition, (and) uniqueness," but about understanding that "identities, peoples and cultures... have always overlapped one another through unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness, and, of course, conflict."⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 401.

9 Abstract

Contemporary art in Pakistan in the last decade and a half has experienced a phenomenal evolution attracting ever more international attention. Pakistani artists partake at the large international biennials and other so-called mega exhibitions. How did art in Pakistan - a politically young country – come into being and what are the relevant artistic trends in this country? This PhD thesis investigates how South Asian Muslims over the last century have been producing an important body of work, distinct from their contemporaries in India. South Asian Muslim artists – most of which will become Pakistanis in 1947 – have been drawing upon a complex of frameworks including Indo-Persian aesthetics, Indian regional schools as well as the influence from the West. These hybrid circumstances have shaped the art in Pakistan sustainably .

The focus on how the tradition of Indo-Persian miniature painting has been – during the last century up until today – reinterpreted and appropriated by artists all over the South Asian subcontinent including the Italian artist Francesco Clemente is the first detailed and art historical discussion of this kind. Furthermore particular attention has been drawn to artists who – in the quest of developing a truly Pakistani modern art – have explored the abstract and expressive possibilities of the script, of Islamic Calligraphy.

In Pakistan, in the early 1990s, a group of artists explored the nature of the relationship between high art and popular culture embedded in an aesthetic debate with political overtones. What has loosely been termed as “popular art movement” has far reaching effects and its impact on the local art scene is only now, more than ten years after its emergence, slowly being acknowledged. Last but not least this very pluralistic situation is what the younger and contemporary art scene in Pakistan is being influenced by, together with a whole lot of contemporary confusion which is nurturing valuable and exciting art works.

Zeitgenössische Kunst in Pakistan hat seit dem letzten eineinhalb Jahrzehnt eine phänomenale Evolution erlebt und zieht immer mehr internationale Aufmerksamkeit auf sich. Pakistanische Künstler und Künstlerinnen nehmen an den grossen internationalen Biennalen und den so genannten Megaausstellungen teil. Wie entwickelte sich die Kunst in Pakistan – einem politisch jungen Land – und was sind die relevanten künstlerischen Trends dieses Landes?

Die vorliegende Dissertation untersucht wie südasiatische Muslime seit dem letzten Jahrhundert bedeutende Kunstwerke geschaffen haben, die sich von denen der Zeitgenossen in Indien unterscheiden. Südasiatische muslimische Künstler – von welchen die Mehrheit 1947 Pakistaner wird – haben sich stets auf ein komplexes ästhetisches Rahmengebilde bezogen bestehend aus indisch-persischen- und indisch-regionalen Schulen sowie Einflüssen aus dem Westen. Diese hybriden Umstände haben für die nachhaltige Entwicklung der Kunst in Pakistan beigetragen.

Die Konzentration dieser Arbeit liegt auf dem Re-Interpretieren und dem Aneignen der traditionellen indo-persischen Miniaturmalerei während des letzten Jahrhunderts und untersucht dabei unterschiedliche Vorgehensweisen von Künstlern und Künstlerinnen in Südasien und inkludiert den italienischen Künstler Francesco Clemente. Diese Auseinandersetzung mit der Miniaturmalerei ist die erste kunsthistorische Arbeit dieser Art. Weiters wurde spezielles Augenmerk auf Künstler und Künstlerinnen gelegt die, auf der Suche nach einer eigenen und pakistanischen Moderne, die abstrakten und expressiven Möglichkeiten der Schrift, der islamischen Kalligrafie, entdeckten.

In Pakistan, in den frühen 1990er Jahren, erforschte eine Gruppe von Künstlern und Künstlerinnen die grundlegenden Beziehungen zwischen akademischer Kunst und der populären Kultur. Diese ästhetischen Debatten wurden eng mit politischen Auseinandersetzungen geführt. Was einfach als „popular art movement“ bezeichnet wurde hat nachhaltig Spuren hinterlassen und der Einfluss auf die lokale Kunstszene wird es jetzt, nach mehr als zehn Jahren der Entstehung dieser Bewegung, langsam beachtet. Die junge und zeitgenössische Kunst Pakistans ist von dieser pluralistischen Situation beeinflusst und schöpft daraus sowie aus einer ganzen Menge zeitgenössischer Konfusion ihr Potential und schafft bedeutende und aufregende Arbeiten.

10 LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

I have tried to make the captions in this List of Illustrations as complete as possible. Where dates of artworks are uncertain/unknown, I have followed a convention in art history and used ca. (circa) as a means to allow up to a ten-year span. In the case of artworks with uncertain information regarding size, medium, and ownership, I decided to leave out this data instead of including false details. This entire attempt is made in the belief that revisions will be forthcoming when better evidence is available.

A large number of illustrations derive from books that are named only by title, thus they are all listed in the bibliographical section.

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- 31 Zahoor Ul Akhlaq, Calligraphy, ca. 1974, 60.96 cm x 45.72 cm, etching, private collection, Lahore. Ill: Contemporary Painting in Pakistan.

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- 46 Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Hiroshima, 1971, 182.88 x 101.60 cm, oil on canvas, PNCA, Islamabad. Photo: Simone Wille.
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87 A.R.Chughtai, Jahangir and Nur Jahan, late 1940s, watercolour on paper, 5.08 x 45.72 cm, Chughtai Museum Trust, Lahore. Ill: Contemporary Painting in Pakistan.

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89 Sheikh Shujaullah, Woman with Tampura, handmade colours on wasli paper, PNCA. Photo: Simone Wille.

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91 Shahzia Sikander, Elusive Realities, 2000, 304.8 x 609.6 cm, acrylic on canvas, triptych, collection of the artist. Ill: Shahzia Sikander: Acts of Balance.

92 Shahzia Sikander, Elusive Realities #1, (detail), 2000.

93 Shahzia Sikander, Riding the Ridden, 2000, 20.3 x 13.6 cm, vegetable colour, dry pigment, watercolour, and tea on hand-prepared wasli paper, collection of Niva Grill Angel. Ill: Conversations with Traditions: Nilima Sheikh, Shahzia Sikander.

94 Shahzia Sikander, Ready to Leave, 1997, 25.1 x 19.2 cm, vegetable pigment, dry pigment, watercolour, and tea water on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Drawing Committee. Ill: Shahzia Sikander: Acts of Balance.

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- 96 Shahzia Sikander, *The Resurgence of Islam*, 1999, Vegetable colour, dry pigment, watercolour, gold leaf, and tea on hand-prepared wasli paper, 40 x 50.2 cm. Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York. Ill: drawing now: eight propositions.
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- 103 Shahzia Sikander, *SpiNN*, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie,
Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 104 Krishna bemächtigt sich der Kleider der Mädchen von Vraja, Dem Meister am Hofe von Mankot zugeschrieben, Blatt einer horizontalen Bhagavata Purana-Serie, c. 1700, 19.2 x 28.5 cm, Inv. Nr. 1268, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, Ill: Pahari-Meister. Höfische Malerei aus den Bergen Nord-Indiens, B.N.Goswamy und Eberhard Fischer, Zürich, Museum Rietberg, 1990.
- 105 Shahzia Sikander, *SpiNN*, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie,
Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 106 Shahzia Sikander, *SpiNN*, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie,
Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 107 Solomon on his Flying Throne. Safawid period. Early 16th century, Black line and gold on paper; tinted with red, blue and green, image area 30.8 x 19.8 cm. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution Washington D.C. (acc.no. 50. 1), Ill:

Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology. Collected Essays, Ebba Koch, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001.

- 108 Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie, Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 109 Flying Fairies Carry Carry Raja Bikram toward Kanakgir, Deccan School, 1743, opaque watercolour with gold on paper, 35.6 x 25.4 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.: Illustration from the Gulshan-i-Ishq.
- 110 Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie, Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 111 Nav Nari Kunjar, The Elephant of Nine Girls, Mid 19th century, 32.5 x 25.5 cm, Ill: Krishna as Shrinathji.
- 112-114 Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie, Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 115 Shahzia Sikander, Maligned Monsters, 2000, maquette for banner, banner in collection of the artist. Ill: Projects 70: Janine Antoni, Shahzia Sikander, Kara Walker.
- 116 The Descent from the Cross, detail. 1598, Opaque water colour on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (I.S. 133 1964, f.79). Ill: Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology. Collected Essays, Ebba Koch, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001.
- 117 Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003, 6.38 min. digital movie, Photo: Courtesy Shahzia Sikander and Brent Sikkema, New York.
- 118 Imran Qureshi, Beware the Buyers , 1999, ca. 20 x 26 cm, mixed technique on wasli, Queensland Art Gallery and Museums, Brisbane, Australia. Photo:

Simone Wille.

- 119 Album Painting, Jahangir's Dream, ca. 1618-22, 24 x 15 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, (Signed Abu'l Hasan, Nadir al-Zaman "The Wonder of the Age"). Ill: Imperial Mughal Painting.
- 120 Imran Qureshi, Beware the Buyers II , 1999 ca. 20 x 26 cm, mixed technique on wasli, Private Collection, New York, USA. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 121 Imran Qureshi, Aisha Stitches and Imran Wears it, ca. 1999. ca. 11 x 17 cm, mixed technique on wasli: Photo: Simone Wille.
- 122 Imran Qureshi, Aisha Stitches and Imran Wears it, 2000. ca. 10.16 x 15.24 cm, mixed technique on wasli, Privat Collection, France (Virginia Whiles), Photo: Imran Qureshi.
- 123 Imran Qureshi, Missile, ca. 1999. ca. 18 x 27, mixed technique on wasli. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 124 Mandi, Rājā Shamsher Sen of Mandi, Atelier of Rājā Shamsher Sen, ca. 1760-70, 14 x 23.2 cm – 18.5 x 28.2 cm, acc. No. NCM 96. Ill: Karl Khandalavala, Pahari Miniature Paintings in the N. C. Mehta Collection, (Gujarat Museum Society: n. d., Ahmedabad).
- 125 Imran Qureshi, A Lover waiting for his Beloved, 1999. 28 x 21 cm, gouache on wasli, Albert L. Borden Jr. Ill: Pakistan: Another Vision.
- 126 Muhammad Imran Qureshi, Inside Out, 2006, mixed media on wasli, 20.32 x 22.86 cm. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 127-130 Imran Qureshi, Moderate Enlightenment, 2009, 17 x 23 cm, gouache on wasli paper, Photo: David Alesworth.

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- 131 Aisha Khalid, Silence with pattern, 2000, 26.6 x 36.8 cm, mixed technique on wasli, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 132 Aisha Khalid, Silence with pattern, 2000, 26.6 x 36.8 cm, mixed technique on wasli, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 133 Aisha Khalid, Behind the Curtain, 1999, 18.2 x 14.2 cm, opaque watercolour on wasli, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille. (not existant anymore, reworked in 2000)
- 134 Aisha Khalid, Birth of Venus, 2001, 26.6 x 26.6 cm, mixed technique on wasli, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 135 Aisha Khalid, Conversation II, 2000, 15.2 x 27.9 cm, mixed technique on wasli, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 136 Afghan women in a reception camp for fugitives in Iran, Image Reuters, in Neue Zürcher Zeitung 21 June 2001.
- 137 Aisha Khalid, untitled, 2001, Fukuoka Museum, Japan. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 138-139 Aisha Khalid, Conversation, video still, 2002. 120 min double screen video installation. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 140 Aisha Khalid, Barbed, 2006, 15.75 x 21.59 cm, opaque water colours on wasli paper, Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 141-144 Aisha Khalid, Face It, 2009, installation details at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, Venice, Italy, gouache on wasli paper, collage, mirror, wood. Photo: David Alesworth.
- 145-146 Imran Qureshi, Leakage, 2009, installation details at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, Venice, Italy, emulsion, acrylic, steel pipes. Photo: David Alesworth.

- 147 Bani Abidi, Mangoes ,Video Still, 1999, single channel, 3mins 24sec, edition of 5. Collection of Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 148 Bani Abidi, The News, Video Still, 2001, video, single channel, 4mins 24sec, edition of 5, Collection of Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and private collections in India and USA, Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 149 Bani Abidi, The Ghost of Mohammad Bin Qasim, 2006, inkjet prints on archival paper, 28 x 18.5 cm, (x9), edition of 5, Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 150-151 Bani Abidi, The BoyWho Got Tired of Posing, 2006, c-prints, 51 x 76 cm (x3), edition of 3. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 152 Bani Abidi, Karachi Series 1, Duratrans lightboxes, 50.8 x 76.2 cm (x6), edition of 3, Jerry Fernandez, 7:45 pm, 21st August, 2008, Ramadan, Karachi, 2009. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 153 Anwar Saeed, We Sing and Recite Poetry Keeping the Heavens Awake, 2000, 22.9 x 50.8 cm, Collection of Murlidhar Dawani. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 154 Anwar Saeed, Song for the Melting Ice, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 213.4 cm, Collection of Muheena Zuberi. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 155 Nusra Latif Qureshi, Manifest Destiny, 2003, gouache on board, 30 x 40 cm. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 156 Nusra Latif Qureshi, Sites of Omission, 2003, gouache on wasli, 30 x 40 cm. Photo: Courtesy the artist.

- 157 Nusra Latif Qureshi, Did You Come Here To Find History, 2009, twenty digital prints on transparent film, size variable. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 158 A pair of eyes photographed from a truck. Photo: Simone Wille
- 159 Buraq, photographed from a truck. Photo: Simone Wille
- 160 Heart Mahal , Detail , front, 1996. Photo: courtesy Durriya Kazi.
- 161 Arz-E-Mauood, The promised Lands, 1997, Installation view at Frere Hall Gardens in Karachi. Photo: courtesy Durriya Kazi.
- 162 Arz-E-Mauood, The promised Lands, 1997, detail of panel. Installation view at Frere Hall Gardens in Karachi. Photo: courtesy Durriya Kazi.
- 163 Arz-E-Mauood, The promised Lands, 1997. Installation view at Frere Hall Gardens in Karachi. Photo: courtesy Durriya Kazi.
- 164 David Alesworth, Probes, 2003-2008, Various size units in variable installations (22. pieces, individual works, 45.72 cm hoch bis 3m hoch), zinc plated mild-steel. Photo: David Alesworth.
- 165 David Alesworth, Adnan Madani, Underneath the Moghul Arch, 2003, A4 size, digital print. Photo: courtesy David Alesworth.
- 166 Durriya Kazi, Witness, 2008, clay sculpture, Photo: Simone Wille.
- 167 Hamra Abbas, Please do not step 1, 2004, installation view, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, sizes variable, Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 168 Hamra Abbas, Lessons on Love, 2007, sculptures, coloured plasticine, Photo: courtesy the artist.

- 169 Kama Sutra. Courtesy the artist Hamra Abbas
- 170 Faiza Butt, A Hero's Work Is Never Done, 2007, ink and acrylic on paper, 122 x 152 cm, Photo: courtesy Green Cardamom, London.
- 171 Rashid Rana, What is so Pakistani about this Painting, 2001, 13.97 x 30.48 cm, acrylics, oil, fabrics on canvas. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 172 Rashid Rana, This Picture Is Not at Rest,
- 173 Rashid Rana, All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade, 2004, digital print on 8 panels, 248.9 x 609.6 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 174 Rashid Rana, All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade, Detail. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 175 Ayaz Jikhio, titled (mother and child), 2005, 207 x 280 cm/24 x 18 cm, gesso, graphite and paper-collage on board/ oil on canvas. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 176 Mahbub Shah, Untitled, Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 177 Huma Mulji, Art Vendor, 1999, Perspex, PVC and aluminium, 56 x 76 x 51 cm. Collection of the artist. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 178 Huma Mulji, Mera Ghar, 2002- aar paar, Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 179 Huma Mulji, But What Is Your Country Madame?, 2005- modified 2006, Aluminium Muslim Showers, Fiberglass suitcase, cast aluminium, faux suede, faux leather, cardboard, private collection. Photo: Simone Wille.
- 180 Huma Mulji, Arabian Delight, 2008, Taxidermic camel, rexine suitcase, metal rods, wood, cotton wool, and fabric. 105 x 144 x 155 cm. The Saatchi Gallery, London.. Photo: courtesy the artist

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- 181 Huma Mulji, Housing Scheme, 2008, Edition 1/6, C-Print, 101,6 x 152,4 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 182 Adeela Suleman, Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop, Installation detail, 2001. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 183 Adeela Suleman, Salma, Sitara and Sisters – Motorcycle Workshop, Installation detail, 2001. Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 184 Naiza Khan, Homage to Hokusai, 2000, Photo: Courtesy the artist.
- 185 Naiza Khan, Henna Hands, 2000, Installation view at Chowkandi gallery, Karachi, sizes variable. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 186 Naiza Khan, Henna Hands, 2000, Installation view near the railway station, Karachi. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 187 Naiza Khan, Exhale, 2004, watercolour on fabriano, 31 x 23 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 188 Naiza Khan, Six Strands, 2002, acrylic ink on fabriano, 31 x 23 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 189 Naiza Khan, Dream-1996, 2004, conte and acrylic ink on paper, 27.5 x 100 cm.. Photo: courtesy the artist
- 190 Naiza Khan, Seive-I, 2002, watercolour on fabriano, 31 x 23 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 191 Naiza Khan, Straight Jacket, 2005, watercolour on fabriano, 46 x 31 cm. Photo: courtesy the artist.
- 192 Naiza Khan, Straight Jacket, 2005, watercolour on fabriano, Photo :courtesy the artist.

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12 Glossary of Selected Terms

Arz-e-Mauood	The Promised Lands
Aripanas	(Hindu) spiritual circles
Bhagavad Gita	The Song of the Lord. Today the Bhagavad Gita is known by virutally all Hindus and many recite from it daily by heart
bindu	(pl.) bindi, a point.
buraq	legendary winged horse who carried the prophet Mohammed to Jersusalem
burqa	veil with which Muslim women cover themselves
chillava	(Punjabi) multiple personalità
darbār	Reception, audience, court assembly
Dast-e-teh-e-Sang	The Hand Caught Under the Rock
Devata	Hindu term for deity
Dews	Demon, evil spirit, see also jinn
Dhikr	the repeating of litanies in sufism
Dīwān-i āmm	Hall of public audience
doa-nevisi	written prayers
dupatta	a long and multi purpose scarf worn by South Asian women
farman	(or firman) official document, decree
ghubar	“dust” script
gopals	herdsmen
gopis	herdswomen
griffin	a legendary creature with the body of a lion with and the head and wings of an eagle
Jharōka	Viewing window. Architectural frame for official appearances of the Mughal emperor.
Jinns	see dewes

Contemporary Art from Pakistan: A Continual Process of Reconstructed Pasts and Anticipated Futures

Kadamba tree	evergreen and tropical tree native to South and South East Asia
Khalsa	refers to all baptised Sikhs. Originally, the Khalsa war formed a saint-soldier army, khalsa translating in to pure
kufi	the earliest form of Arabic calligraphy
Mahabharata	one of the great Hindu epics is part of the so-called true bibles of Hinduism
Mazar	mausoleum
Nai Kiran	A New Ray of Light
nāma	History
naskh	script
Nastaliq	is the predominant style in Persian calligraphy
Nur ud-din	“Light of Religion”
Padshah nāma	emperor history"=the history of the emperor
pardakht	(or par dokht) an even finish
pietre dure	a highly specialized form of stone intarsia
purdah	veiling; sequestration of women, the physical division of the areas in which the men and women live in the house, and a consequent separation of men’s and women’s worlds
saqqakhaneh	devotional fountain
shahâda	Islamic profession of faith
shalwar kameez	traditional three-piece suite worn in many part in South Asia.
shikasta	the “broken” style of tal’ik calligraphy
swadeshi	self – sufficiency, the demands for the right to self-determination; movement of national identity in India
tal’ik	the “hanging” style of calligraphy
tawhid	the absolute oneness of God
tughrā	the royal hand sign.
Ukiyo-e	literally translated: pictures of the floating world. It refers to the main genre of Japanes wood block printing
Ulama, ulema	ist he term for a scholar in Islam
ustad	a master in any art or profession.

wasli

self made paper support

13 Abbreviations

NCA	National College of Arts
IVSAA	Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture
BNU	Beaconhouse National University

14 Curriculum Vitae

SIMONE WILLE

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Born : 1969

Nationality : Austria

EDUCATION

Since October 2002

PhD Candidate at the University of Vienna, Austria. Subject: *Contemporary Art from Pakistan. A Continual Process of Reconstructed Pasts and Anticipated Futures.*

Study and research abroad, 2003/2004

Scholarship from Vienna University for scientific research in London and Pakistan

MPhil, Art History and History/Media studies, October 2002

University of Vienna, Innsbruck and Rome – Cum laude

- Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New

Study and research abroad, 2000 – 2003

Scholarship from Vienna University and from the Italian Foreign Ministry

Universita' La Sapienza, Bibliotheca Hertziana, both Rome, Italy;

National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan;

EXPERIENCE (selected)

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 2011 | March 12-18, Guest Lecture at BNU, (Beacon House National University) Lahore, Pakistan |
| 2011 | March 20, Paper Presentation , “The Politics of Representation of Contemporary Art with a Muslim Background in Western Institutions, FICA (Foundation for Indian contemporary Art), New Delhi, India |
| 2010 | Paper presentation : <i>Revival of miniature painting at Lahore. Analysis of how traditional techniques and iconographies are employed for new socio-cultural concerns.</i> 20 th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art (EASAA)
European Association for Archaeology and Art EASAA Conference , |
| 2007 | Guest Lecture at the BNU, Lahore, Pakistan |
| 2005 | Paper presentation, INST Conference , Vienna, Austria
Layers of Time and Space. Ein Überblick über die Entwicklung der zeitgenössischen Kunst in Pakistan und ein Ausblick auf die derzeitige Situation in den Ländern Südasiens insgesamt |
| 2005-2006 | Curator : Exhibition, “Zeitspruenge, Raumfolgen” („Layers of Time and Space“), ifa-Galerien, Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany |
| 2004 | VASL workshop Karachi, Pakistan (with the support of the BMAA) |
| 2004 | Guest Lecture at Karachi University (Pakistan) |
| 2003 | Guest Lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria |
| 1999 – 2002 | Austrian Business Committee for the Arts , Vienna, Austria,
Project assistant |

1998 **Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum**, Innsbruck, Austria
Project assistant

PUBLICATIONS (selected)

Since 1998 **Free-lance Journalist and Art Critic**

- *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Feuilleton

Guest Correspondent *Nukta Art (South Asian Art Magazine)*

Guest Correspondent Take on art (New Delhi based Art Magazine)

Selected Publications:

- 2010 *Pakistani Art at the Devi Art Foundation*, www.universes-in-universe
- 2010 *Schauplatz Pakistan*, Feuilleton, NZZ
- 2009 “Trumping History”, in *Bani Abidi: Videos, Photographs & Drawings*, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009).
- 2008 *Offenbarung einer Tragödie: Zu Sarnath Banerjee “Colonel’s Brain“, Tanz auf dem Vulkan*, exhibition catalogue, ifa, Berlin und Stuttgart
- 2007 *Bani Abidi: When posing becomes intriguing*, www.universes-in-universe
- 2007 *Born to Be*, exhibition catalogue, Abdullah Syed, Karachi, Sydney.
- 2006 *IRICS Beitrag* for “Innovations and Reproductions in Cultures and Society”. Online Magazine for cultural sciences. Nrt. 16, 6.5
- 2006 *Naiza Khan, Bare the fact*, exhibition catalogue, Mumbai (India).
- 2005 *Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen*, exhibition catalogue and online magazine, ifa-gallery Berlin and Stuttgart
- 2005 National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, exhibition catalogue *Beyond Boders. Art of Pakistan*, “Evaluating Identity in Pakistani Art Today. Notes on Identity-in-the-Making”.
- Hamra Abbas*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, “Considering Peaceful Steps”
- 2004 *VASL*, International Residency, Karachi (Pakistan), catalogue “Notes on a Karachi Experience”.
- 2004 *kunst und kirche 4/04: Kunst und Islam*, „Kunstentwicklung in Pakistan: Nationalismen und Identitätsbildung unter Einflussnahme des Islam.“
- 2004 *CETINJE BIENNIAL 5, Balkan Trilogy, Part II: In the Cities of the Balkans* "Lost In Translation: Hamra Abbas"
- 2004 *KomTech Institut*, „Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Biografie und Politik“
- 2003 *The Journal of South Asian Studies*, Book Review “Image and Identity”

CURATORIAL WORK:

- 2004 *Notes on a Karachi experience*, VM Gallery, Karachi
 Artists: Clio Lloyd-Jacob (London), Luo Yongjin (Peking), Munawar Ali Syed (Karachi), Farah Jamaluddin (Karachi), Riyas Komu (Mumbai)
- 2005/2006 *Layers of Time and Space (Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen)*, ifa gallery Berlin and Stuttgart, Artists: Naiza Khan (Karachi), Shahzia Sikander (New York), Sarnath Banerjee (New Delhi), Hamra Abbas (Berlin/Islamabad), Bharti Kher (New Delhi), Farhana Syeda (Dhaka).

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Contemporary Art from Pakistan: A Continual Process of Reconstructed Pasts and Anticipated Futures

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AUSBILDUNG:

- 2002-Dato *Doktoratsstudium* an der Universität Wien, Kunstgeschichte, Thema: *Contemporary Art from Pakistan. A Continual Process of Reconstructed Pasts and Anticipated Futures* Leitung: Prof. Ebba Koch und Prof. F. T. Bach
- 2003/2004 *Stipendium* der Universität Wien für kurzfristiges, wissenschaftliches Arbeiten im Ausland (London/Pakistan)
- 1996-2002 *Magistra der Philosophie*, Auszeichnung, Kunstgeschichte, Geschichte und Medien: Universität Wien, Innsbruck und Rom. Diplomarbeitsthema: *Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New*
- 2001-2002 *Auslandsstipendium*, Forschungsaufenthalt am National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan
- 2000-2001 *Studienjahr* für wissenschaftliches Arbeiten im Ausland an der Università' La Sapienza und der Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rom, Italien. Stipendium des italienischen Außenministeriums.

BERUFSERFAHRUNG:

- 2011 März, Gastvortrag am BNU, (Beacon House National Universität), Lahore, Pakistan
- 2011 März, Vortrag, „The Politics of Representation of Contemporary Art with a Muslim Background in Western Institutions, FICA (Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art), New Delhi, India
- 2010 Vortrag: *Revival of miniature painting at Lahore. Analysis of how traditional techniques and iconographies are employed for new socio-cultural concerns.* 20th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art (EASAA), Wien, Juli.
- 2007 Gastvortrag an der BNU, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2005 Vortrag, INST Konferenz, Wien, Oesterreich
- 2005-06 Kurator: Ausstellung, „Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen“, ifa-Galerien, Berlin und Stuttgart, Deutschland
- 2004 Vasl workshop Karachi, Pakistan (mit Unterstützung des BMAA)
- 2004 Gastvortrag an der Universität in Karachi, Pakistan
- 2003 Gastvortrag an der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Wien
- 1999-2002 *Initiativen Wirtschaft für Kunst (IWK)*, Freie Mitarbeiterin, Wien
- 1998 *Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum*, Projekt Assistentin

PUBLIKATIONEN:

- Seit 1998 *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Freie Journalistin, Feuilleton, regelmäßige Veröffentlichungen
- Seit 2004 Gast Korrespondentin von Nukta Art (Südasiatisches Kunstmagazin)
- Seit 2011 Gast Korrespondentin von Take on Art (indisches Kunstmagazin)
- Seit 2007 Gast Korrespondentint von www.unverses-in-universe

Ausgewählte Publikationen

- 2003 *The Journal of South Asian Studies*, Bookreview "Image and Identity"
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CETINJE BIENNIAL 5, Balkan Trilogy, Part II: In the Cities of the Balkans
"Lost In Translation: Hamra Abbas"
kunst und kirche 4/04: Kunst und Islam, „Kunstentwicklung in Pakistan: Nationalismen und Identitätsbildung unter Einflussnahme des Islam.“

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Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen, (ed.) Ausstellungskatalog und online Magazin, ifa-Galerien Berlin und Stuttgart
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IRICS Beitrag für „Innovations and Reproductions in Cultures and Society“, Online Magazin für Kulturwissenschaften. Nr. 16, 6.5
- 2007 *Born to Be*, Ausstellungskatalog, Abdullah Syed, Karachi, Sydney.

Bani Abidi: When posing becomes intriguing, www.universes-in-universe
- 2008 *Offenbarung einer Tragödie: Zu Sarnath Banerjee's „Colonel's Brain“*, Tanz auf dem Vulkan, Ausstellungskatalog, ifa, Berlin und Stuttgart
- 2009 *Trumping History*, in Bani Abidi: Videos, Photographs & Drawings, (London: Green Cardamom, 2009).
- 2010 *Schauplatz Pakistan*, Feuilleton, NZZ

Pakistani Art at the Devi Art Foundation, in: www.universes-in-universe

Kuratorische Arbeiten

- 2004 *Notes on a Karachi experience*, VM Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
Artists: Clio Lloyd-Jacob (London), Luo Yongjin (Peking), Munawar Ali Syed (Karachi), Farah Jamaluddin (Karachi), Riyas Kou (Mumbai)
- 2005/2006 *Zeitsprünge, Raumfolgen*, ifa Gallerien Berlin und Stuttgart. Künstler: Naiza Khan (Karachi), Shahzia Sikander (New York), Sarnath Banerjee (New Delhi), Hamra Abbas (Berlin/Islamabad), Bharti Kher (New Delhi), Farhana Syeda (Dhaka).

SPRACHEN: Deutsch (Muttersprache), Englisch, Französisch, Italienisch,

Figures

Pakistan



Fig.1.Map of Pakistan



Fig.2.Roohi Ahmed,
Geodetic Data Unknown, 2002



Fig.3.Roohi Ahmed,
South Asia - Political, 2002

Der pakistanische Blick



Der indische Blick



Fig.4. Map, The Pakistani view, The Indian view.



Fig.5. NAG, Islamabad, Facade, courtesy Vasl archive



Fig.6. Ravi Varma, The Triumph of Indrajit,



Fig.7. Ravi Varma, The Death of Jatayu,



Fig.8. Ravi Varma, The Death of Jatayu,



Fig.9. Ravi Varma, Birth of Sakuntala,



Fig.10. Ravi Varma, Birth of Sakuntala, poster for baby food,



Fig.11. A. R. Chughtai, Radha Krishna, 1930s.



Fig.12.Shakir Ali, Figures with Cattle, 1957.



Fig.13.Shakir Ali, Still Life with Scroll, 1954.



Fig.14.Gaganendranath Tagore, Poet Rabindranath on the Island of Birds, 1920s.



Fig.15.Zubeida Agha,
A Still Life with Horse Cart, 1954.

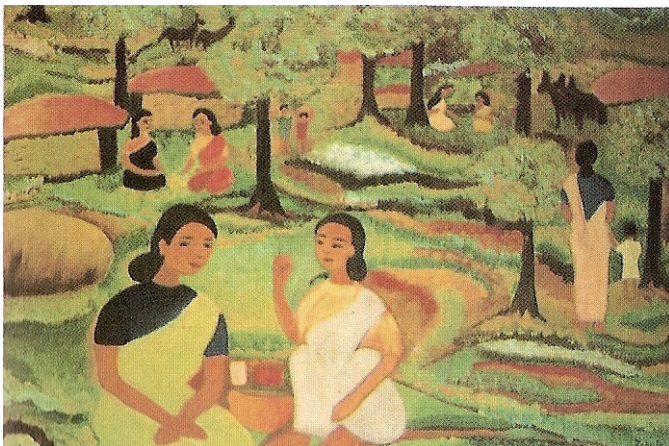


Fig.16.Zubeida Agha, In the Forest, 1958.



Fig.18.Moyene Najmi,Mughal Garden,1970.

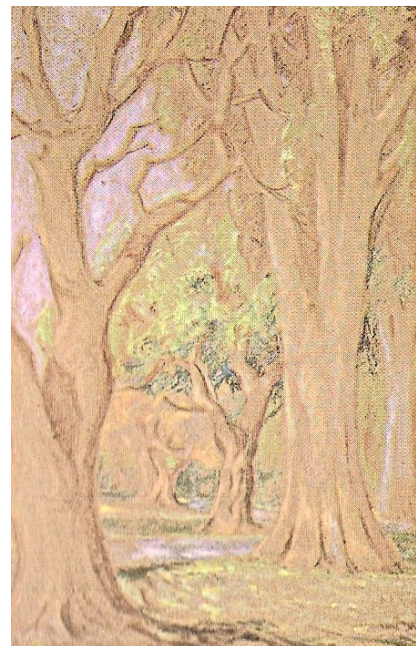


Fig.17.Moyene Najmi, A Landscape, 1949



Fig.19.Zainul Abedin, Famine Sketch, 1943

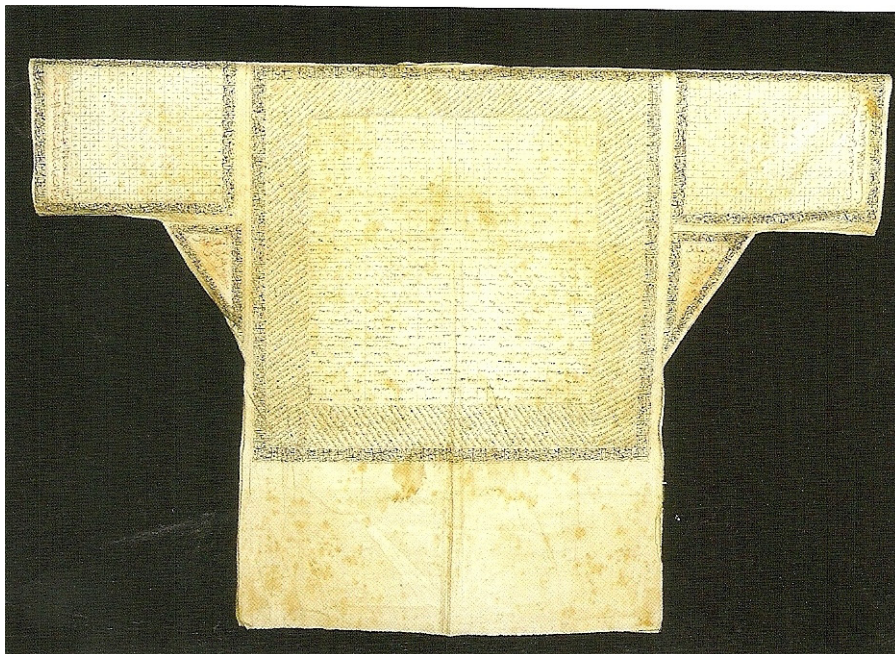


Fig.20.Talismanic Shirt, 16th17th century



Fig.21.Hosseyn Zenderoudi, Untitled, 1959-62



Fig.22.Hosseyn Zenderoudi,
Eyn and Eyn, 1970



Fig.23.Jiro Yoshihara,Sakuhin(Werk),1959.

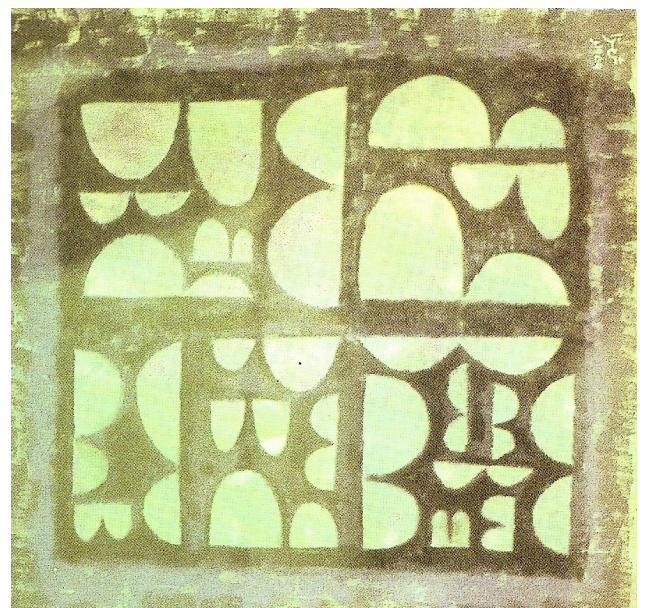


Fig.24.Anwar Jalal Shemza, Bs and Ds, 1959

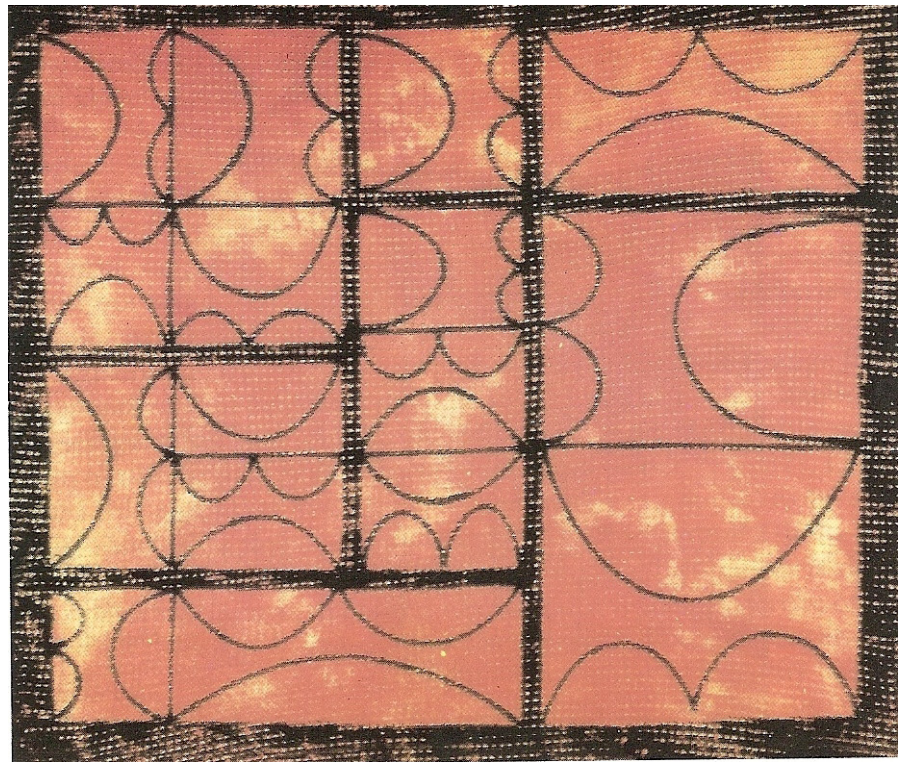


Fig.25.Anwar Jalal Shemza, Untitled,



Fig.26.Anwar Jalal Shemza,
Roots Series, 1984



Fig.27.Henry Van de Velde,
Decorative Plant Composition, ca. 1893

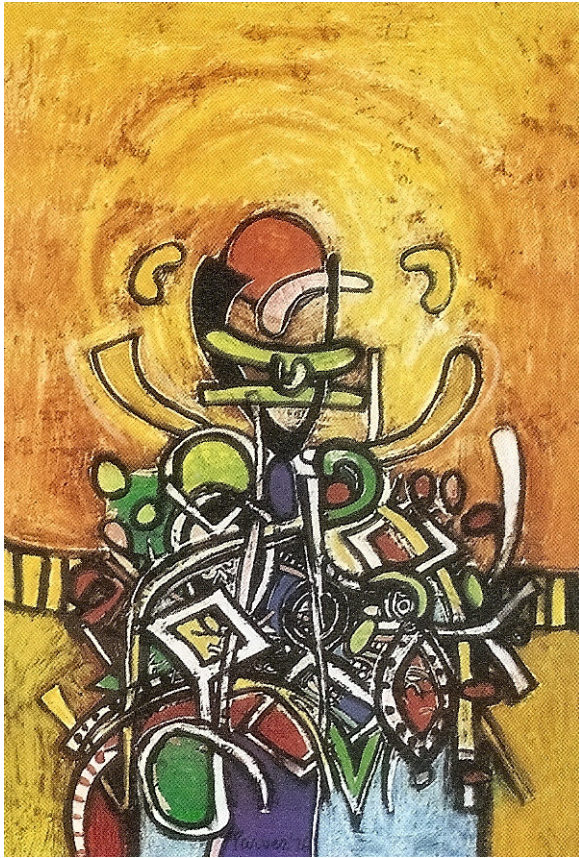


Fig.28.Ahmed Parvez,
Untitled (Crucifixion III), 1976

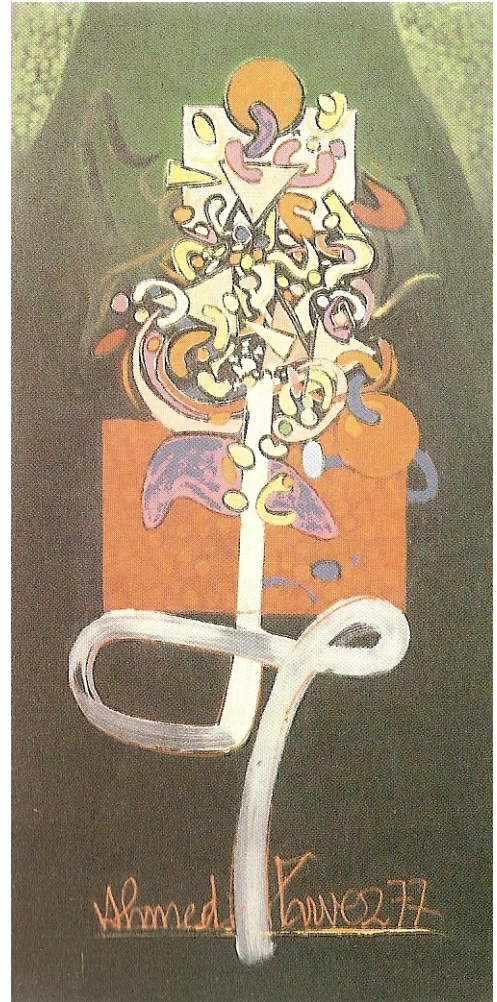


Fig.29.Ahmed Parvez, Bouquet, 1977



Fig.30.Wajih Nahle, The Warrior, 1954

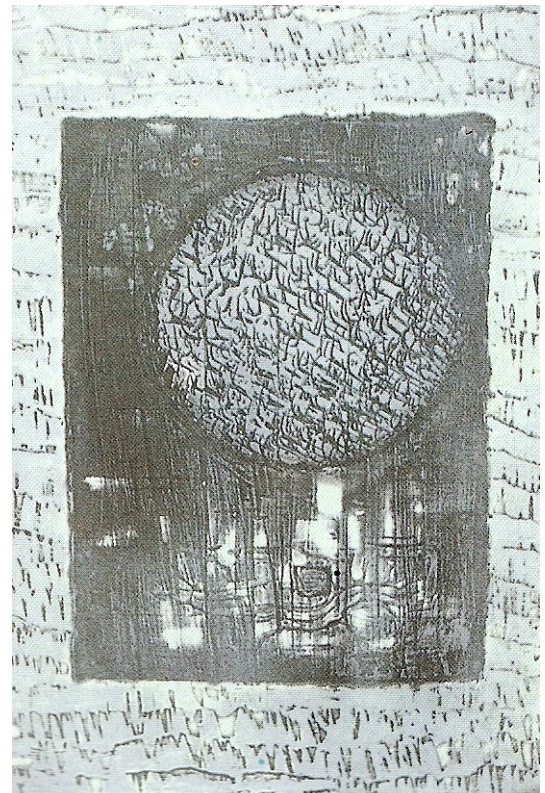


Fig.31.Zahoor Ul Akhlaq, Calligraphy,
ca. 1974



Fig.32.Sadequain, Red Sun Over Cactus Land,

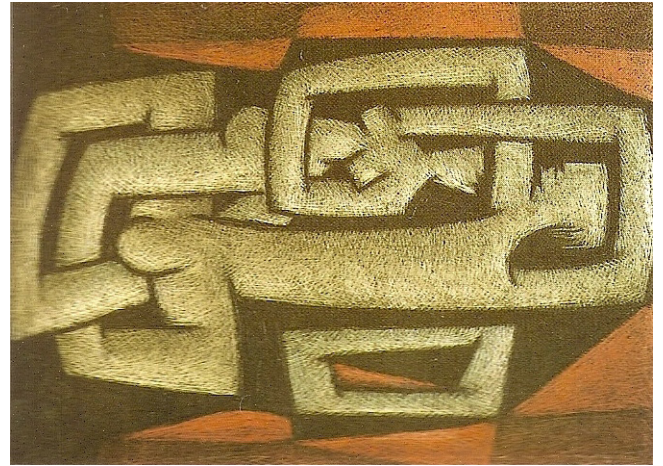


Fig.33.Sadequain, Geometric Innerlock, 1962



Fig.34.Sadequain, Queen of Spades and Jack of Diamonds

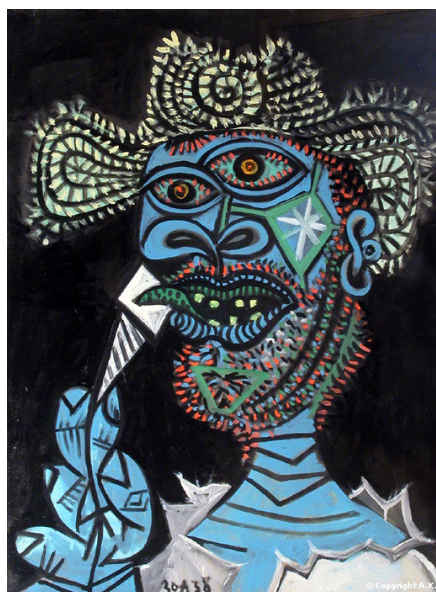


Fig.35.Picasso, Homme au chapeau de paille et au cornet de galce, 1938



Fig.36..Shakir Ali, Beitul Quran, 1969



Fig.37. Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Untitled, 1959



Fig.38. Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Composition, 1964

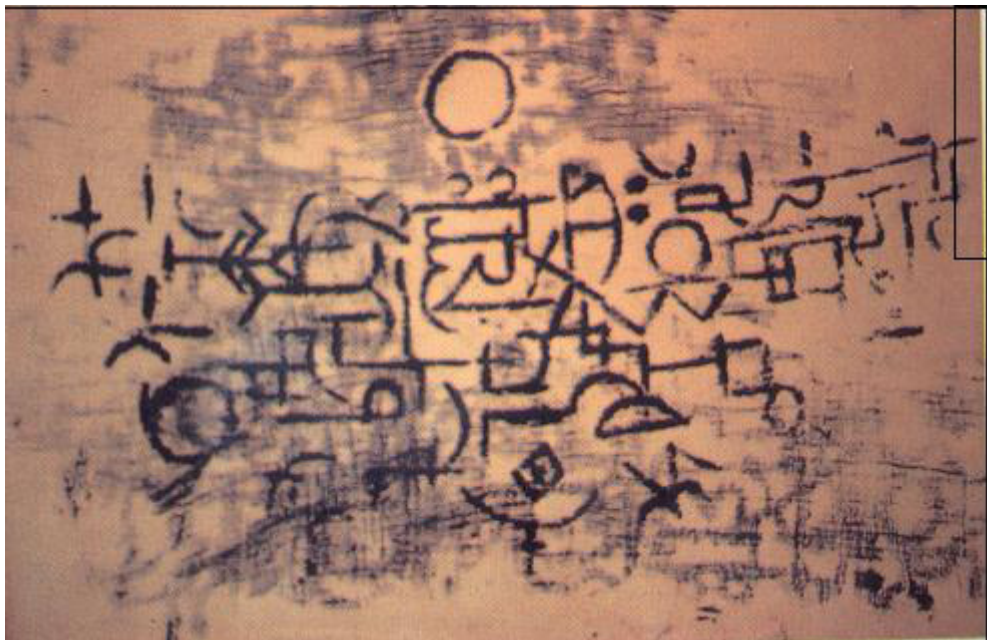


Fig.39. Anwar Jalal Shemza, Calligraphy with Circle, 1965

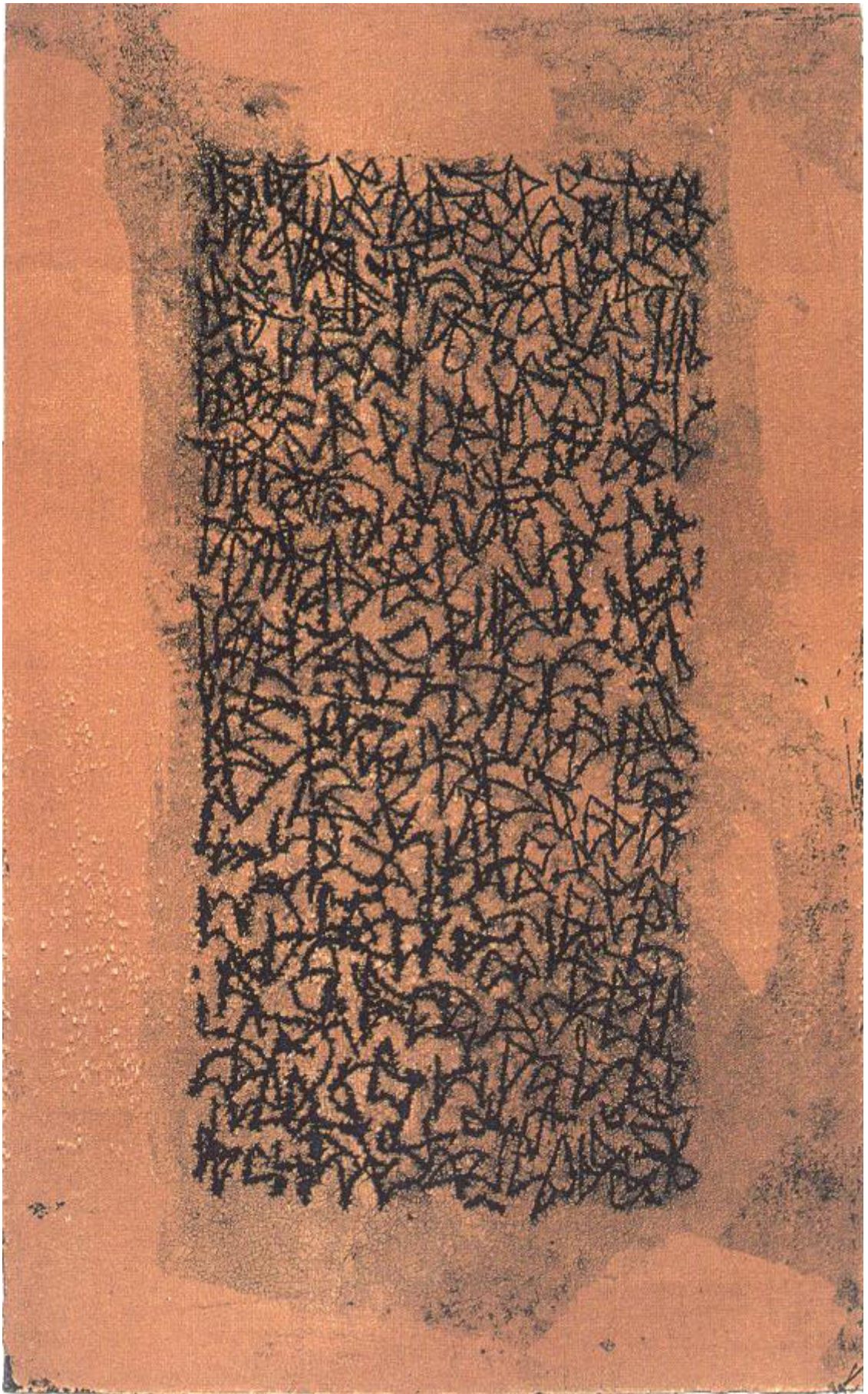


Fig.40.Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Untitled, 1968

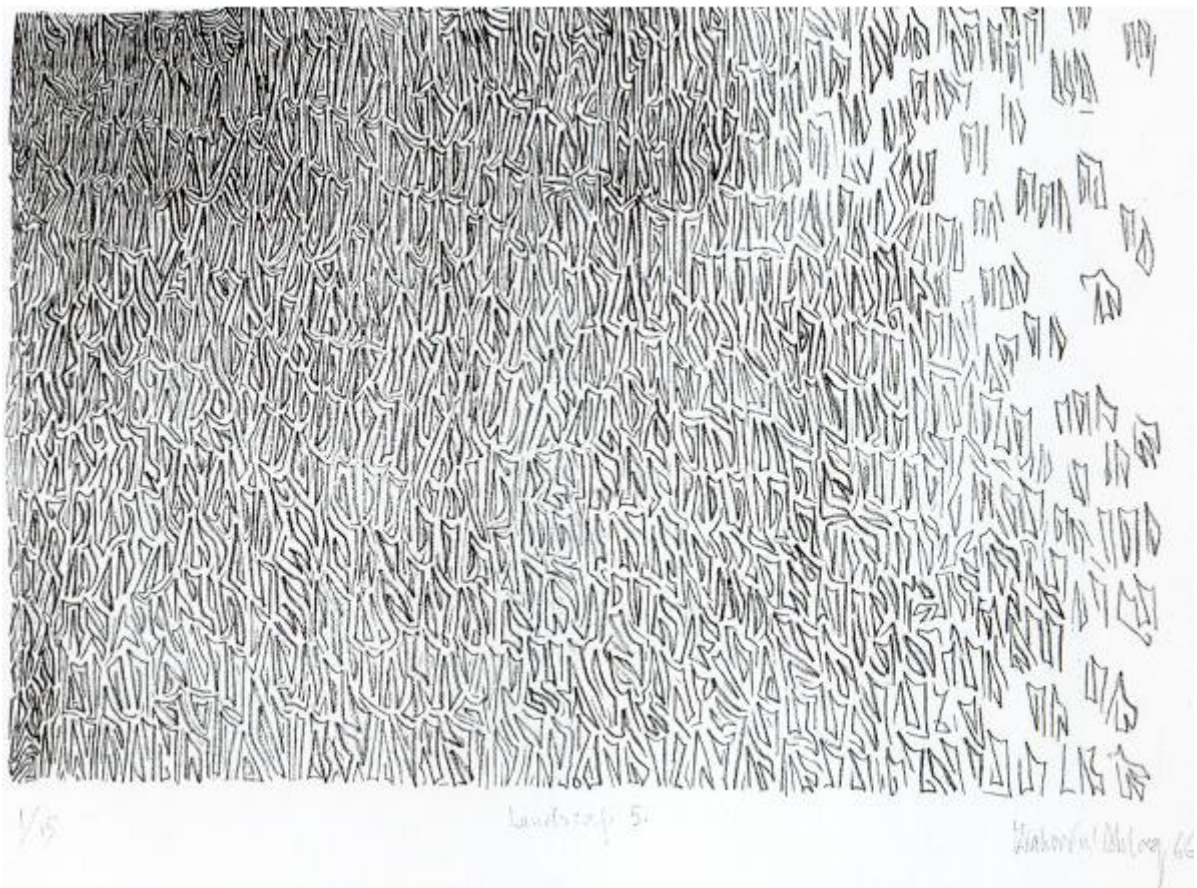


Fig.41.Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Landscape 5, 1966



Fig.42.Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Untitled, ca.1968



Fig.43.A woodcarver's Tool Box



Fig.44.Mirror case with notched decoration



Fig.45.Square table.

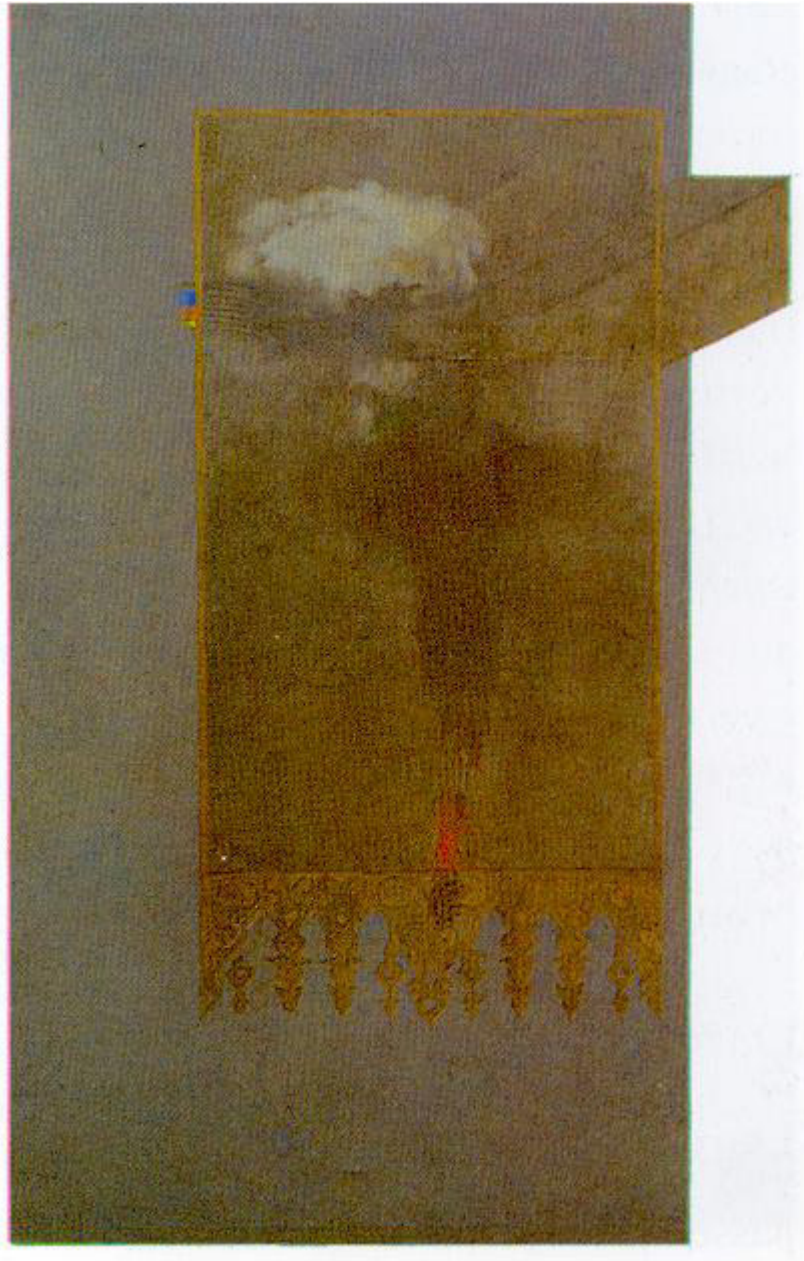


Fig.46.Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Hiroshima, 1971.



Fig.47. Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Untitled, ca. 1982.

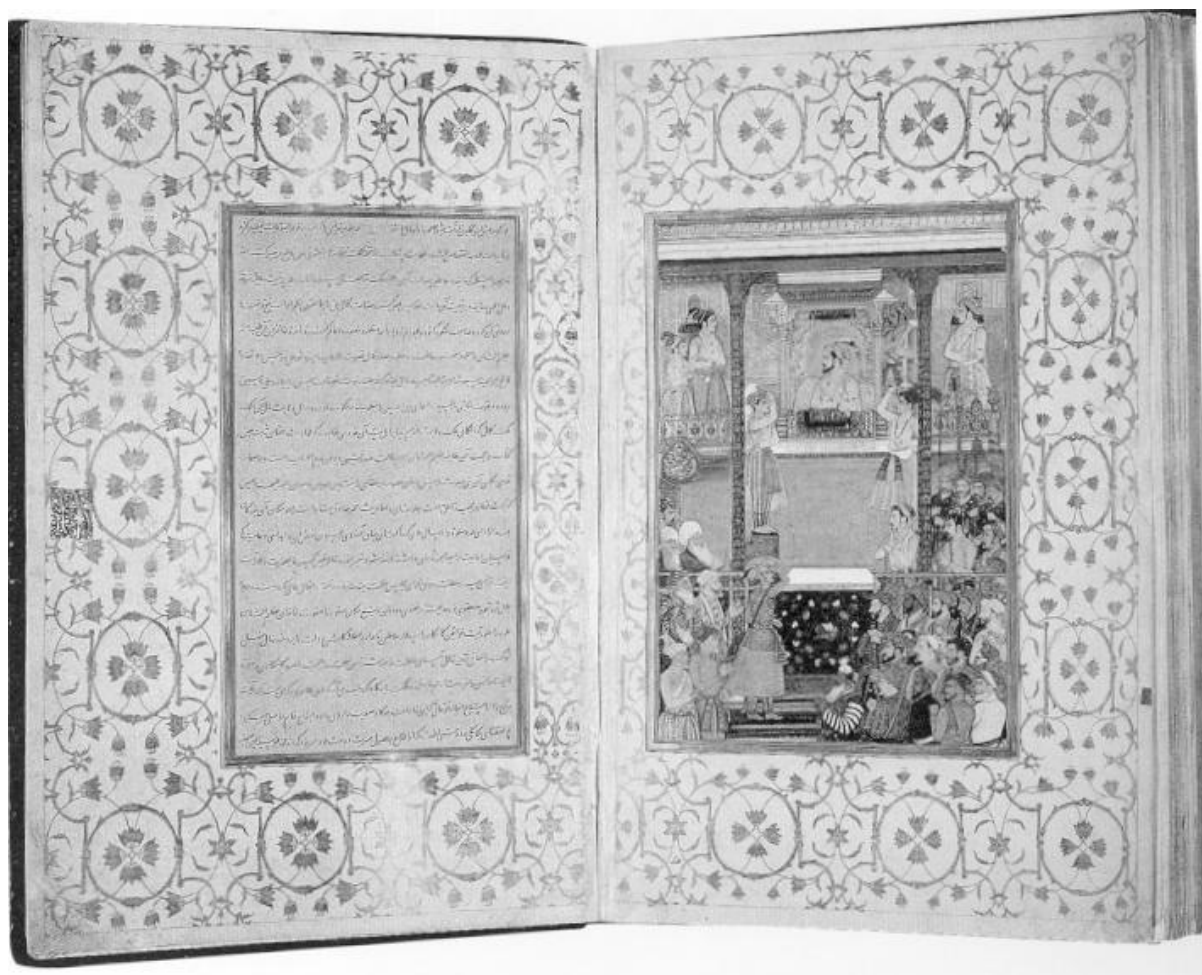


Fig.48.Manuscript of the Windsor Padshahnama of Abdul-Hamid Lahawri, 1656-7.

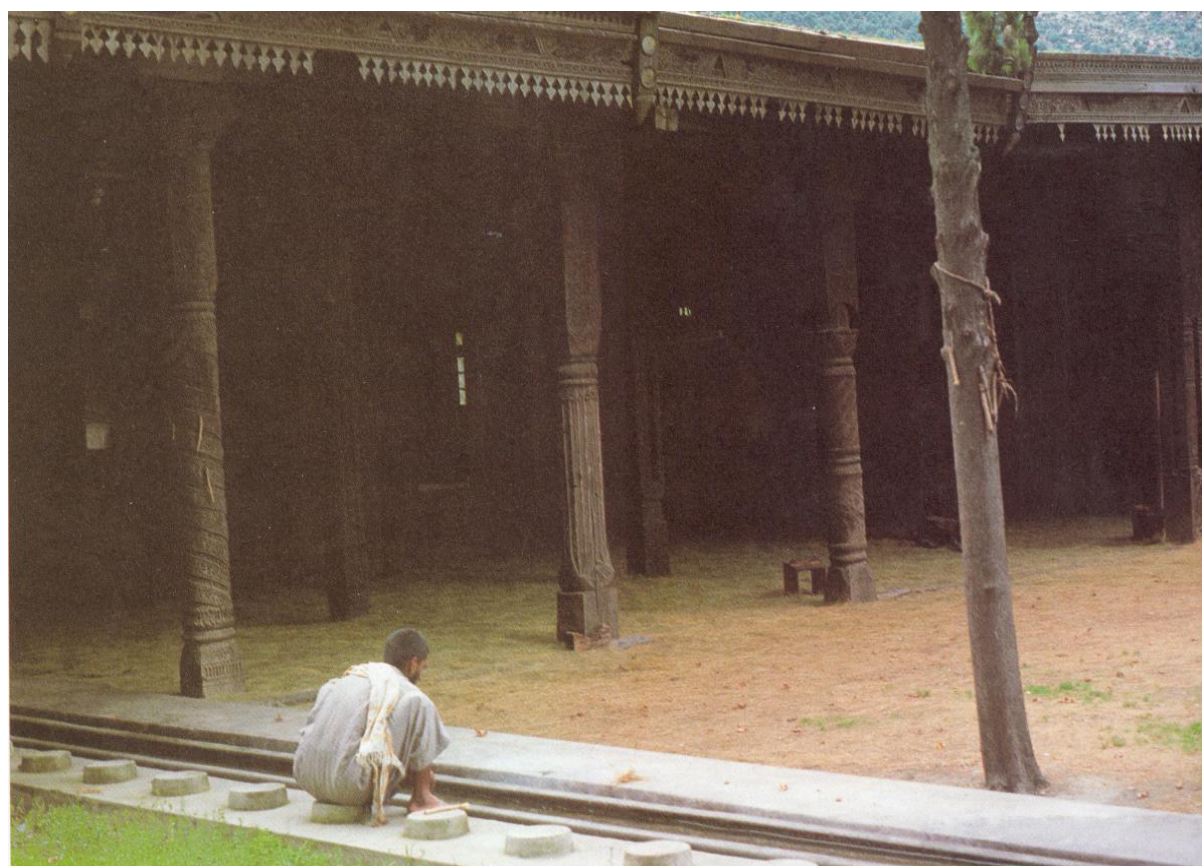


Fig.49.The Great Mosque in Madayan.



Fig.50.Exterior of the mosque at Arin, Swat-Kohistan.

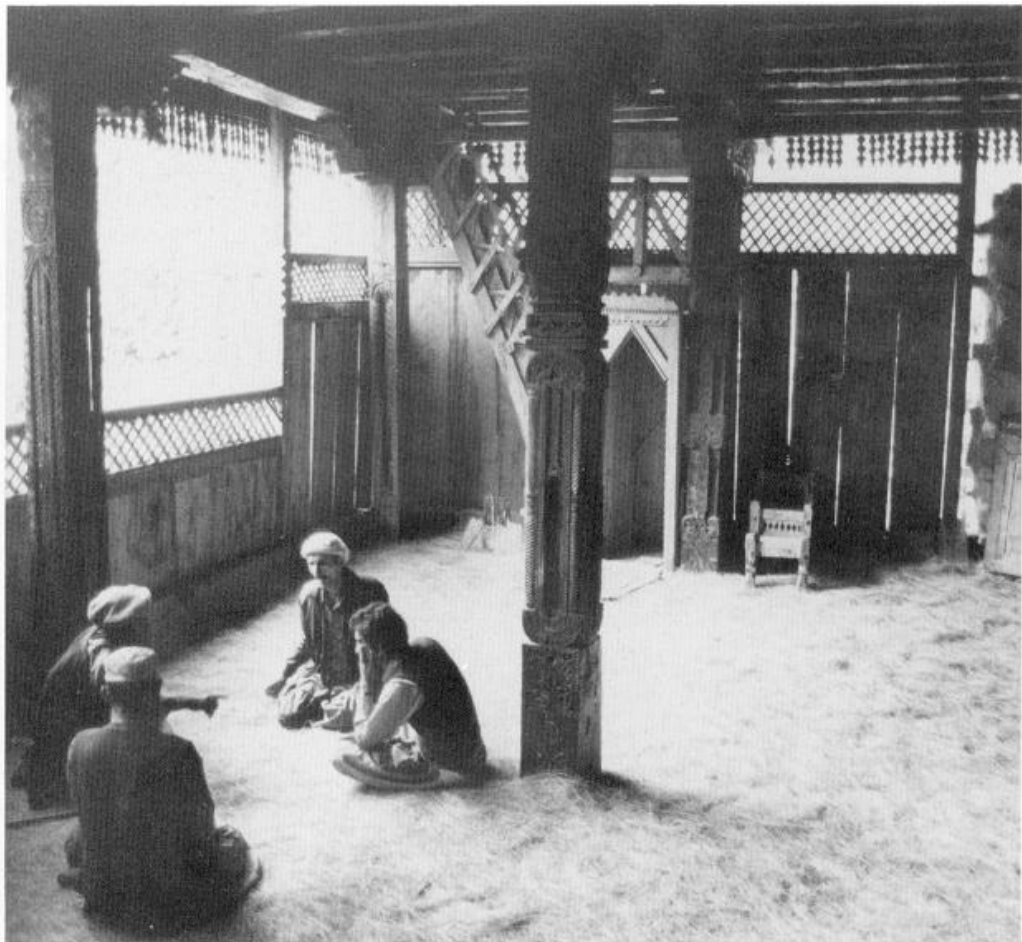


Fig.51.Interior of the mosque at Arin.



Fig.52.Philip Taaffe, Old Cairo, 1989.



Fig.53.Wall panel, 12th century,
Ghazna, Afghanistan.



Fig.54.Ijaz ul Hassan, Firdoz,

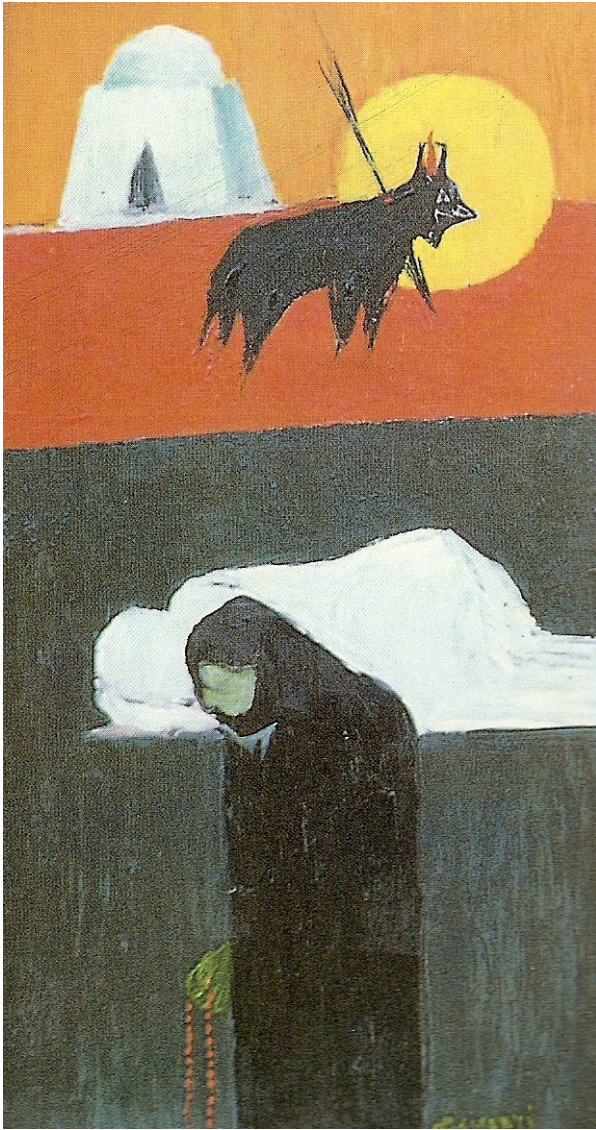


Fig.55.A.R.Nagori, Untitled, 1983



Fig.56.A.R.Nagori, Tower of Power, 1983



Fig.58.Luban Latif Agha,
Painting in White, 1972



Fig.57.Naazish Ataullah, Chaadar VI, 1987

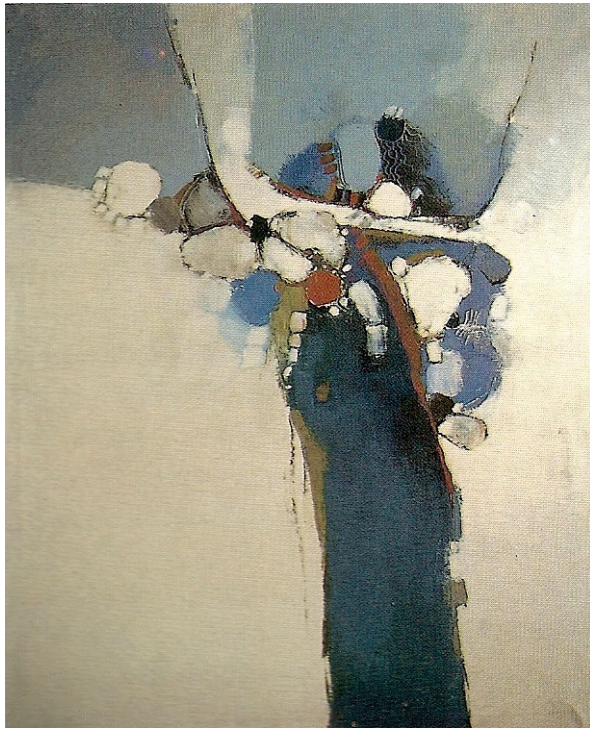


Fig.59. Luban Latif Agha, Untitled, 1980



Fig.60. Luban Latif Agha, Painting in Blue, 1986

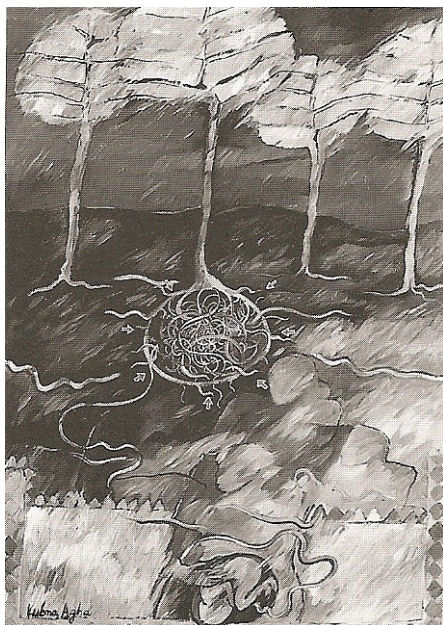


Fig.61. Lubana Agha, Root, 1969.



Fig.62. Abanindranath Tagore, Bharat Mata, c. 1905

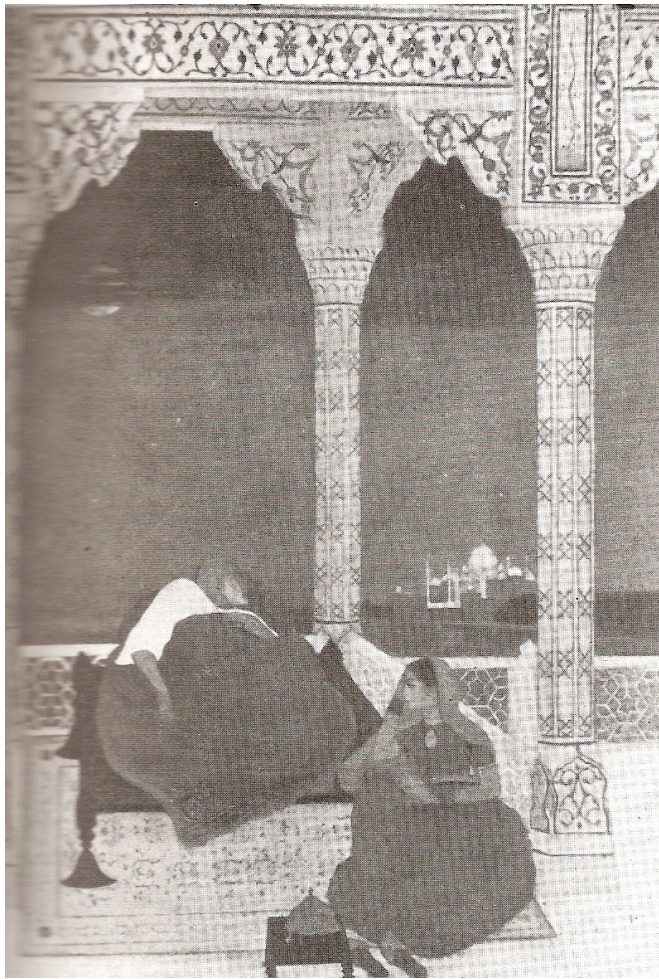


Fig.63.Abanindranath Tagore, The Final Moments of Shah Jahan, 1903

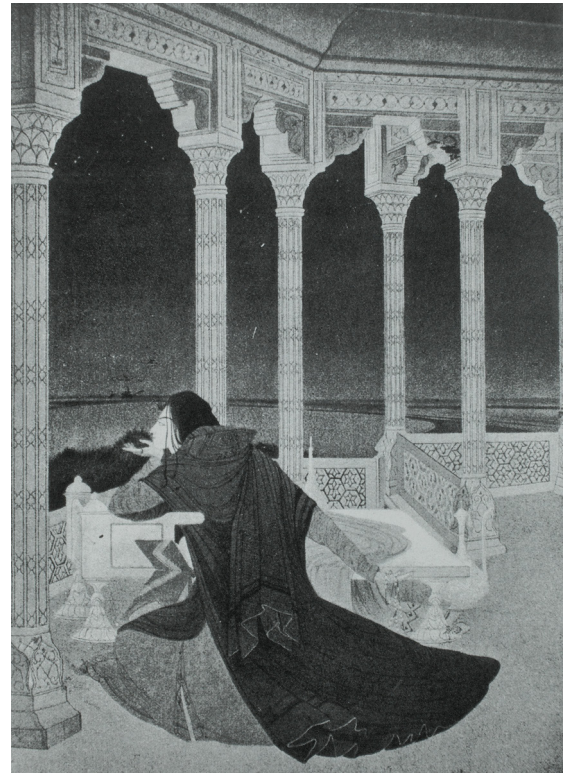


Fig.64.A.R.Chughtai, Jahanara and the Taj,



Fig.65.Jyoti Bhatt,Krishnaleela(detail),1954.



Fig.66.G.M.Sheikh,
Returning Home After a Long Absence, 1969-73

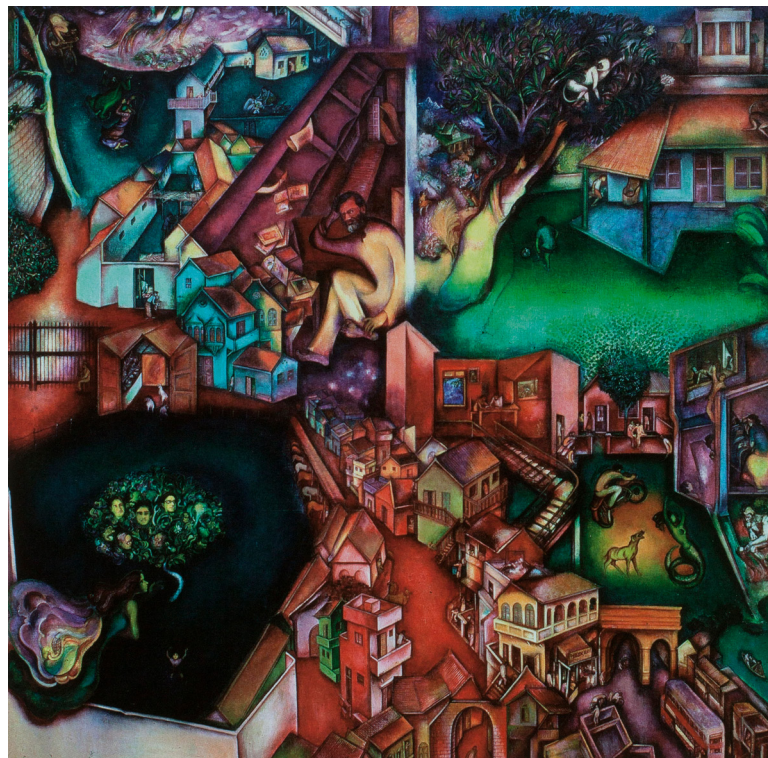


Fig.67.G.M.Sheikh, Revolving Routes, 1981



Fig.68.Bhupen Khakhar,Portrait of Shri Shankerbhai V.Patel Near Red Fort,1971.



Fig.69.Bhupen Khakhar, Janata Watch Repairing, 1972

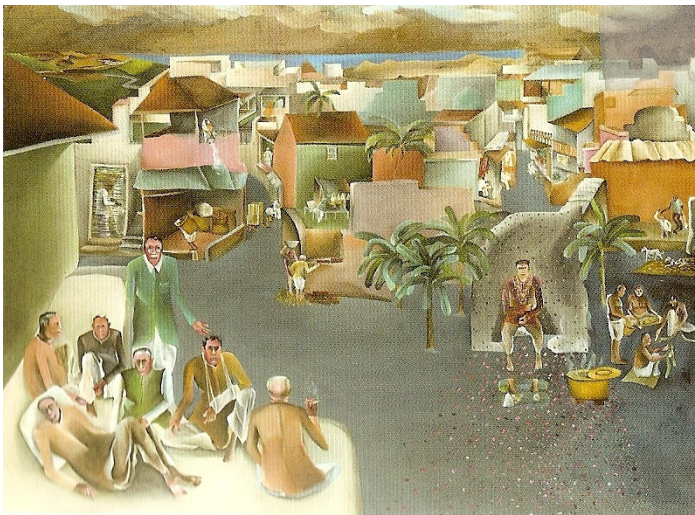


Fig.70.Bhupen Khakhar, The Celebration of Guru Jayanti, 1980

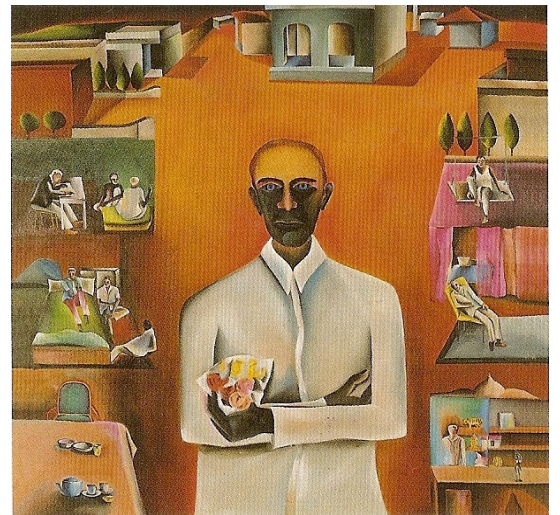


Fig.71.Bhupen Khakhar, Man with Bouquet of Plastic Flowers, 1976



Fig.72.Alighiero Boetti, Mappa del mondo, 1989



Fig.73.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.



Fig.74.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

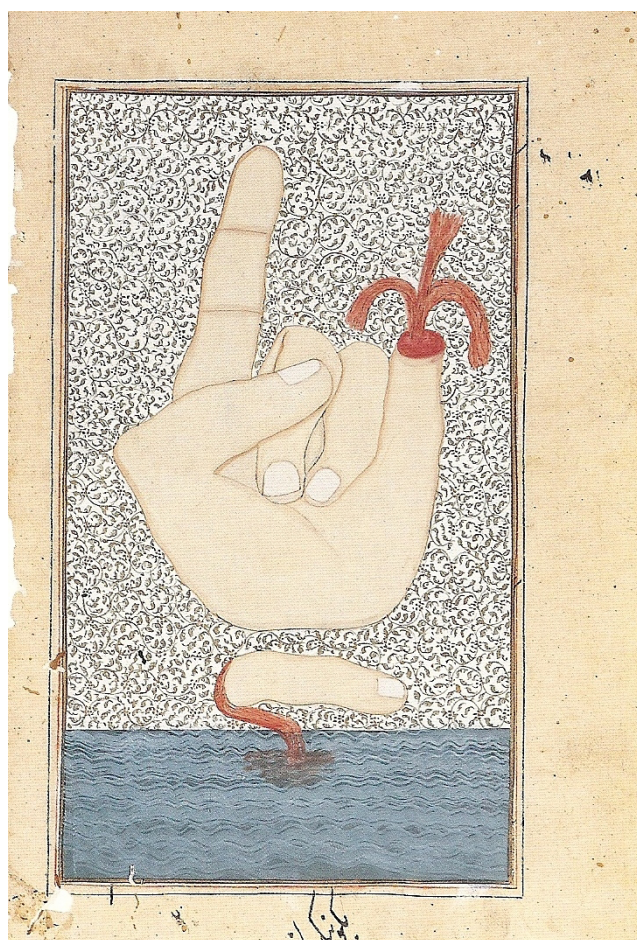


Fig.75.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.



Fig.76.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

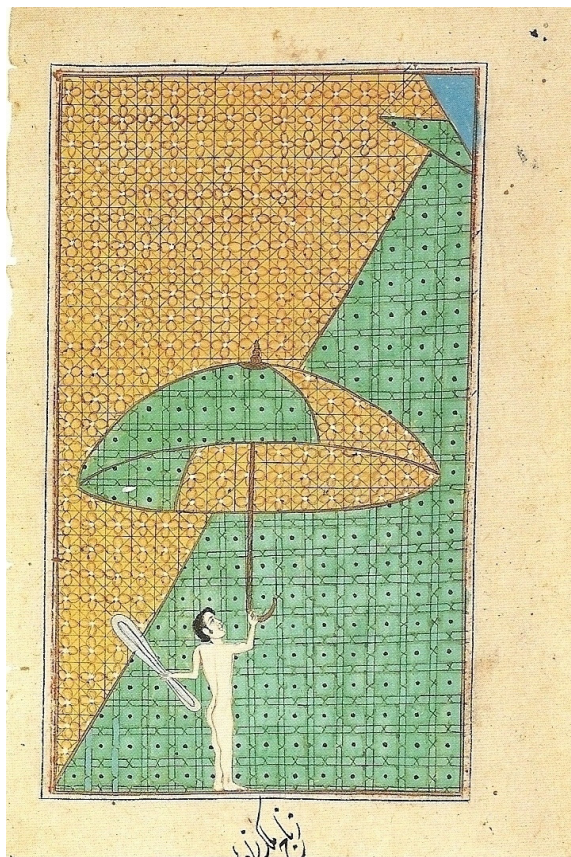


Fig.77.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

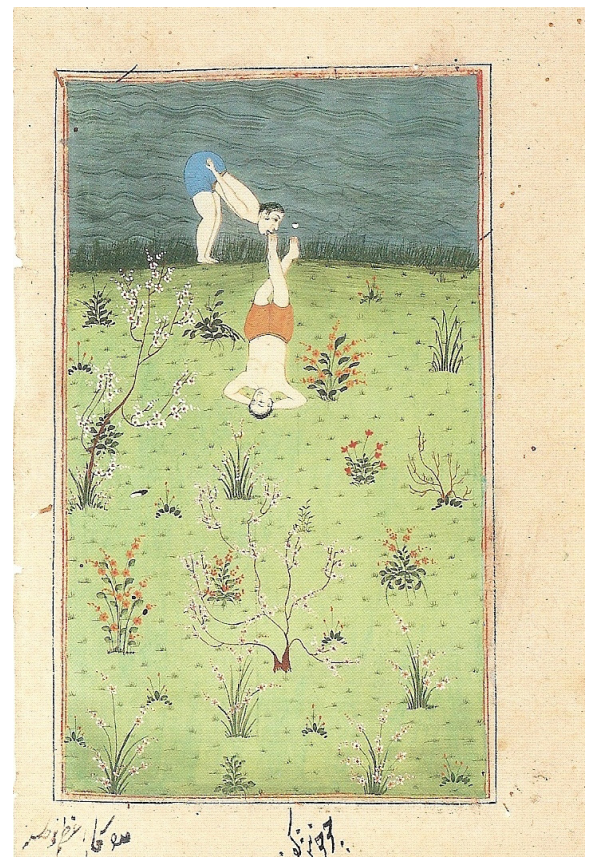


Fig.78.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

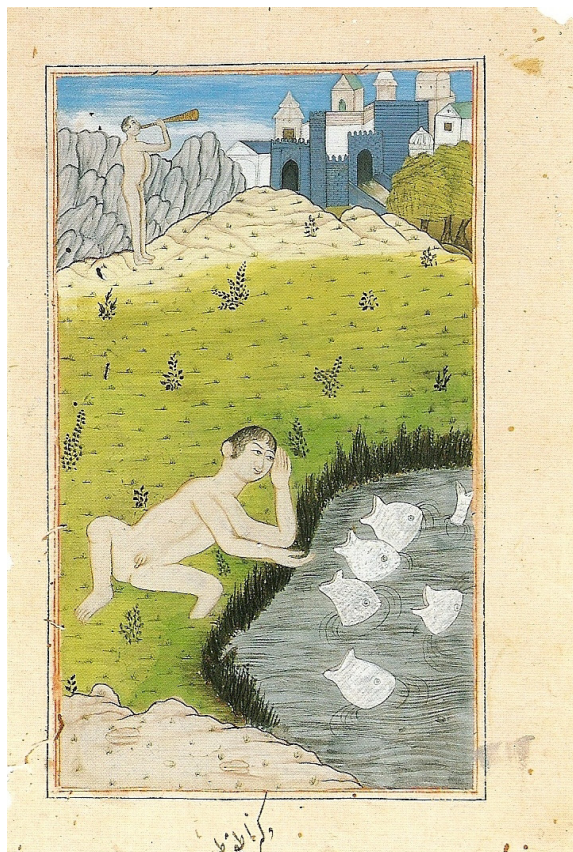


Fig.79.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

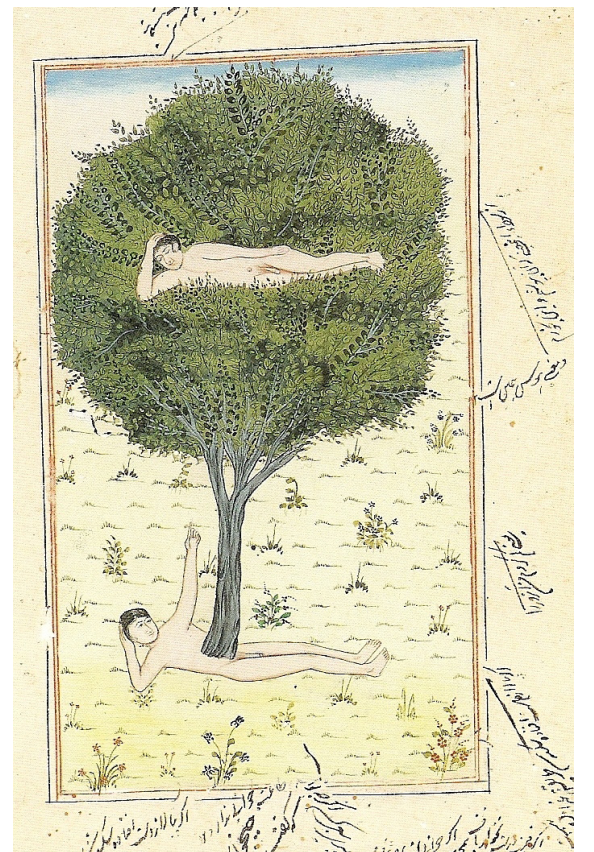


Fig.80.Francesco Clemente,Francesco Clemente Pinxit,1980-81.

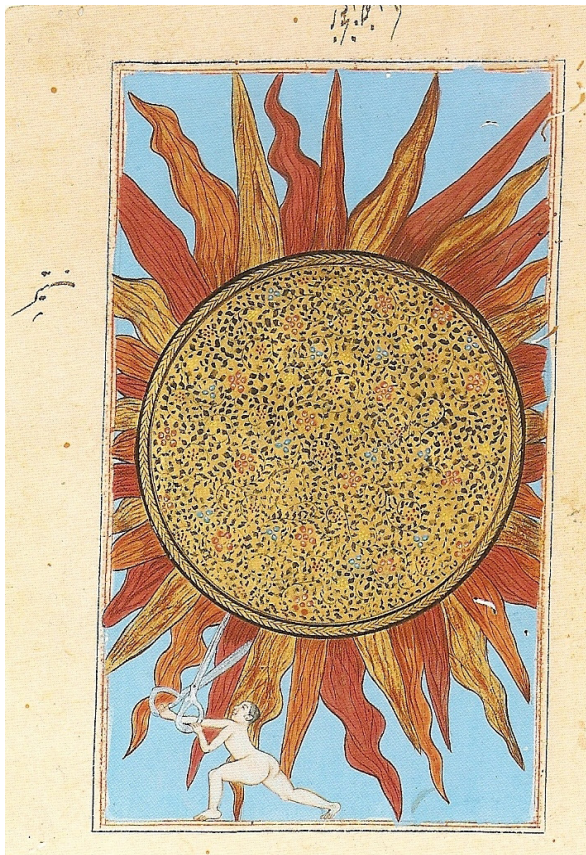


Fig. 81. Francesco Clemente, Francesco Clemente Pinxit, 1980-81.



Fig. 82. Francesco Clemente, Francesco Clemente Pinxit, 1980-81.

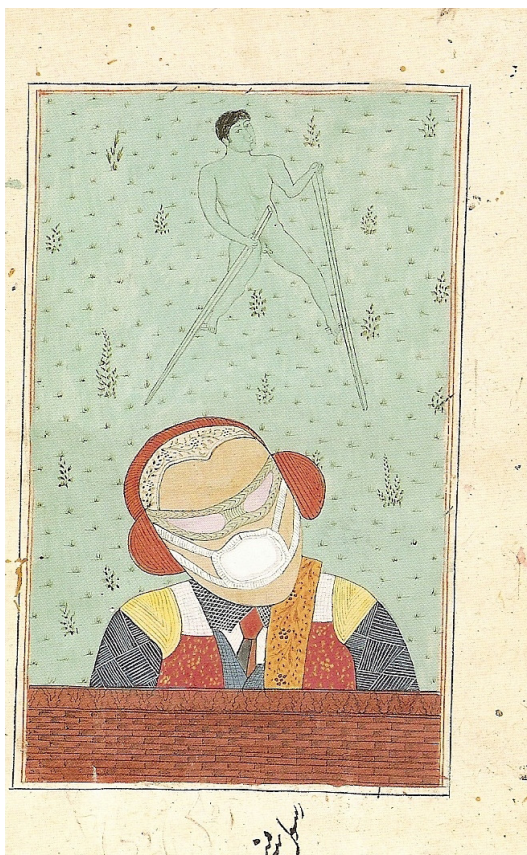


Fig. 83. Francesco Clemente, Francesco Clemente Pinxit, 1980-81.

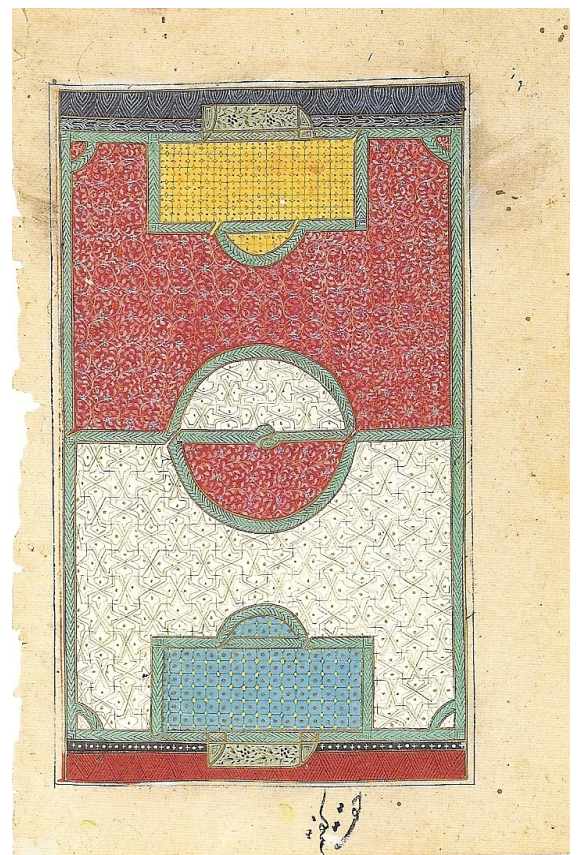


Fig. 84. Francesco Clemente, Francesco Clemente Pinxit, 1980-81.



Fig.85.Nilima Sheikh,By the Hill Stream,1976.

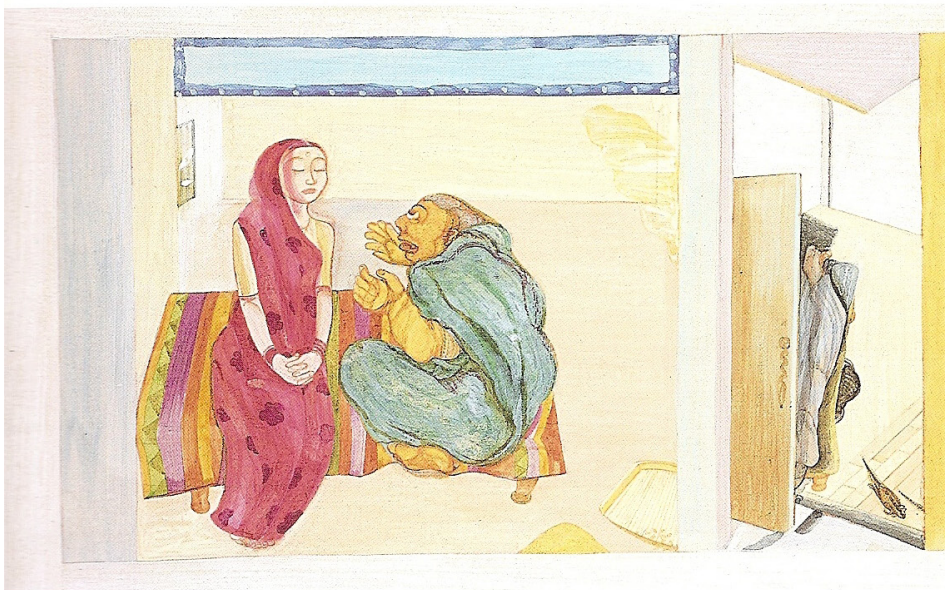
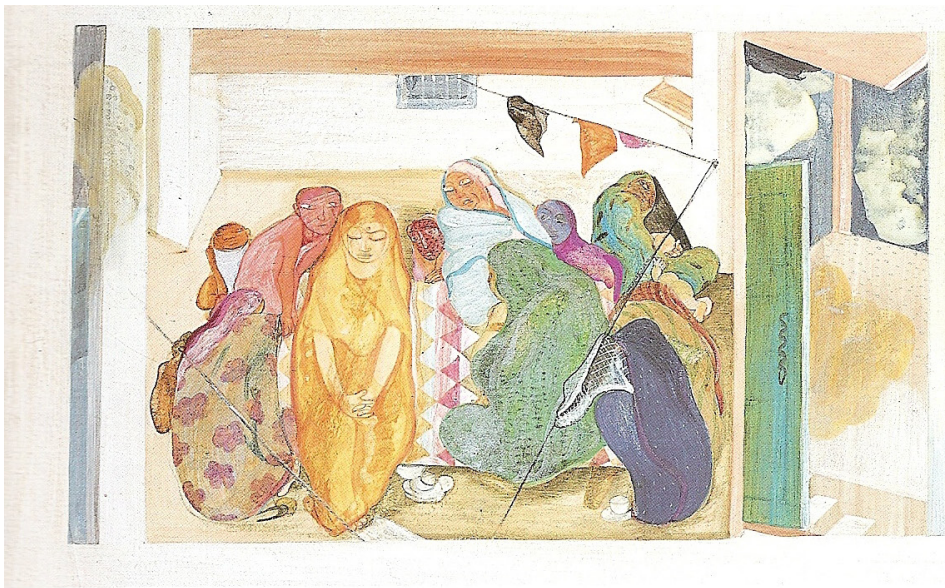


Fig.86.Nili Sheikh,When Champa Grew Up,Top.The womanfolk of the house inspect Champa,the new bride.Bottom.Conflict between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law,while the husband enjoys an aftern1984.



Fig.87.A.R.Chughtai,Jahangir and Nur Jahan, late 1940s



Fig.88.Haji Mohammad Sharif,Guru Gobind Singh,

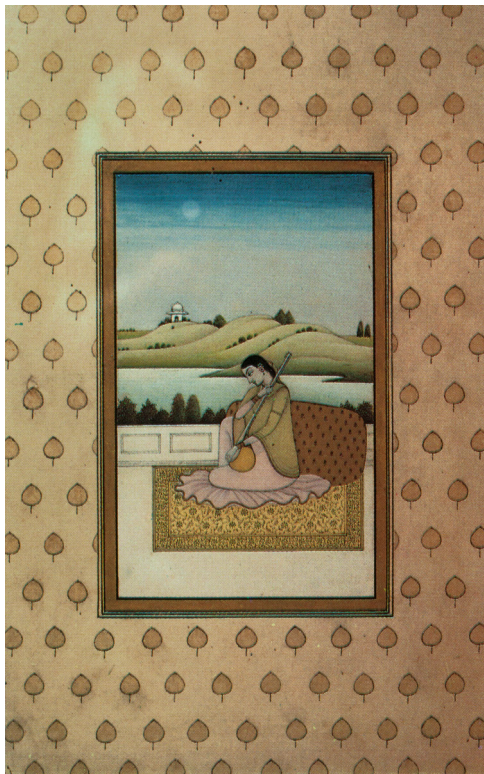


Fig.89.Sheikh Shujaullah,Woman with Tampura,



Fig.90.Shahzia Sikander, The Scroll, 1991-92.



Fig.91. Shahzia Sikander, Elusive Realities, 2000.



Fig.92. Shahzia Sikander, Elusive Realities #1, (detail), 2000



Fig.93. Shahzia Sikander, *Riding the Ridden*, 2000.



Fig.94. Shahzia Sikander, Ready to Leave, 1997.



Fig.95. Shahzia Sikander, Chaman, 2000



Fig.96.Shahzia Sikander,The Resurgence of Islam,1999.

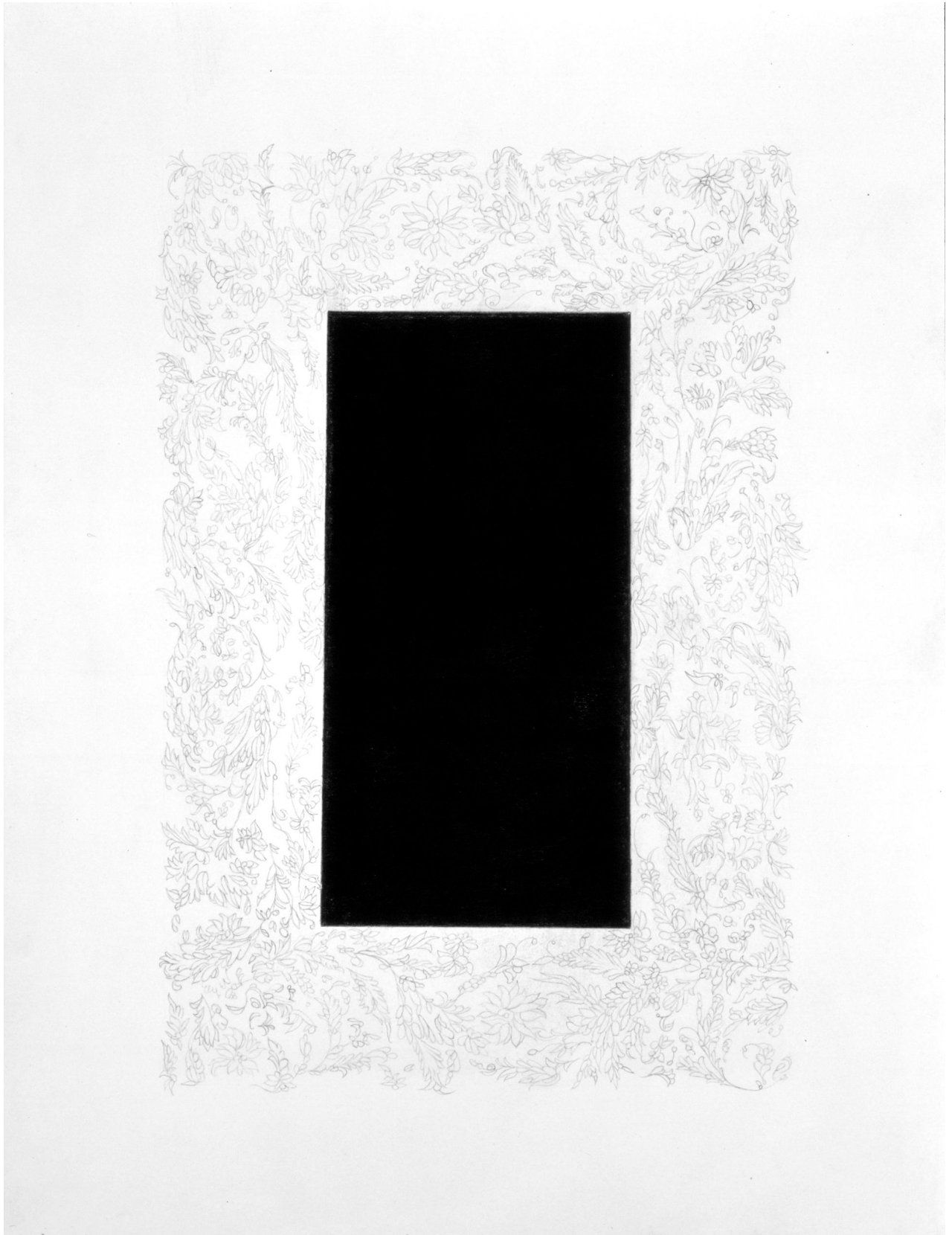


Fig.97. Shahzia Sikander, 51 ways of looking, 2004.

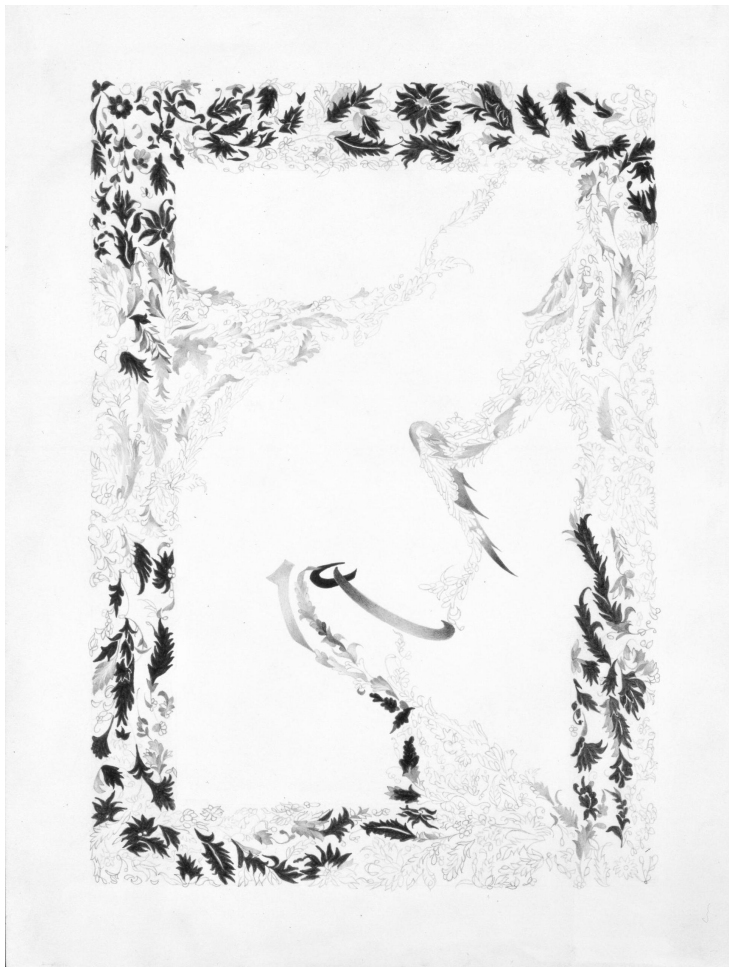


Fig.98.Shahzia Sikander,51 ways of looking,2004.

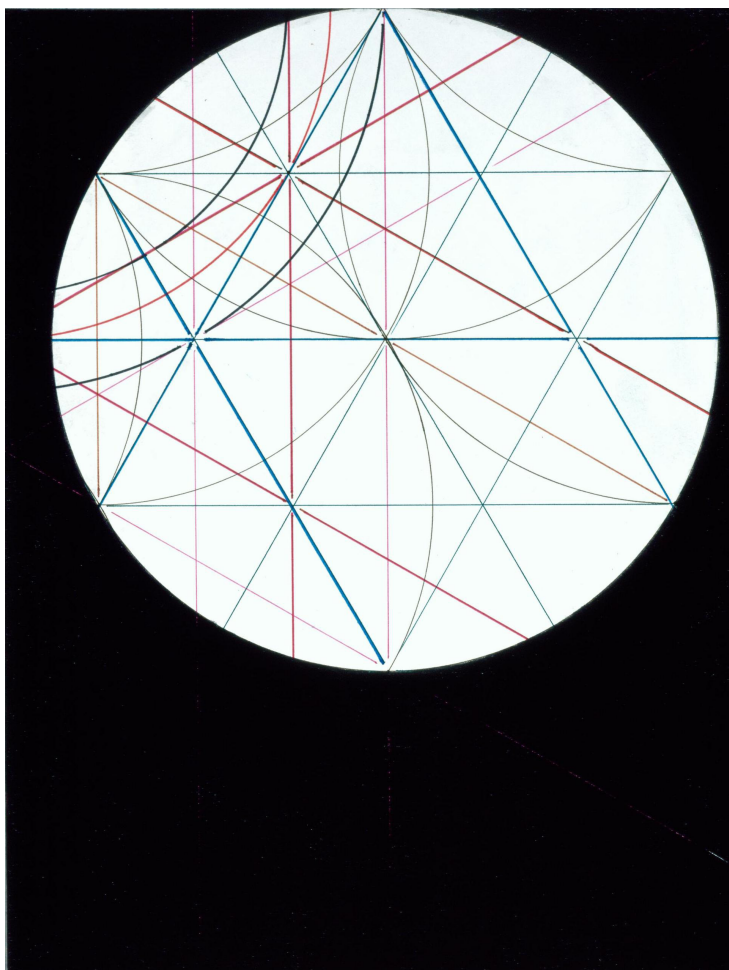


Fig.99.Shahzia Sikander,51 ways of looking,2004.

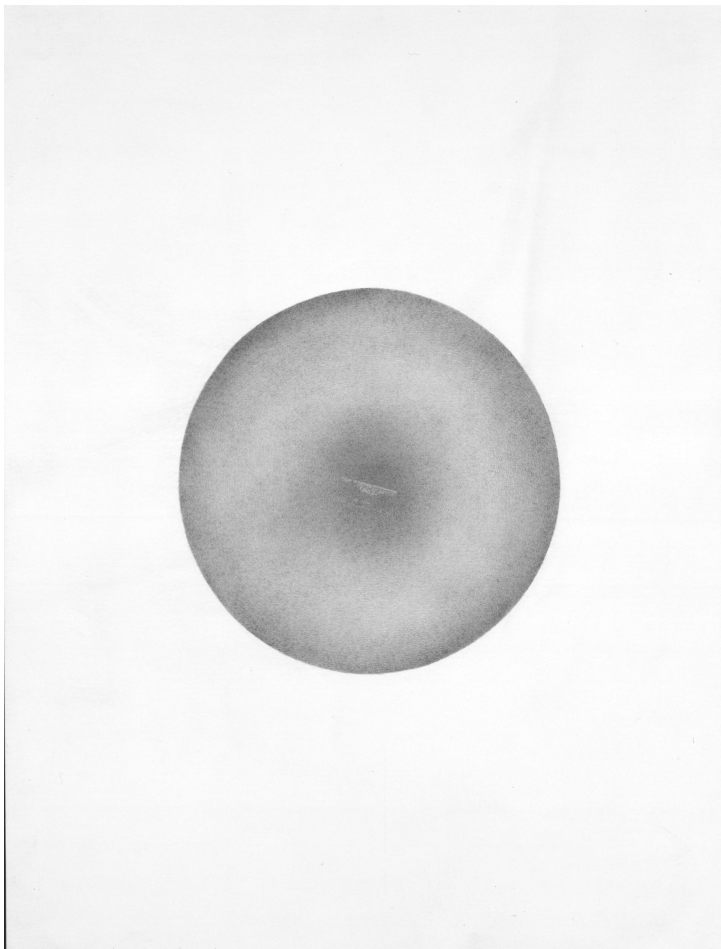


Fig.100.Shahzia Sikander,51 ways of looking,2004.

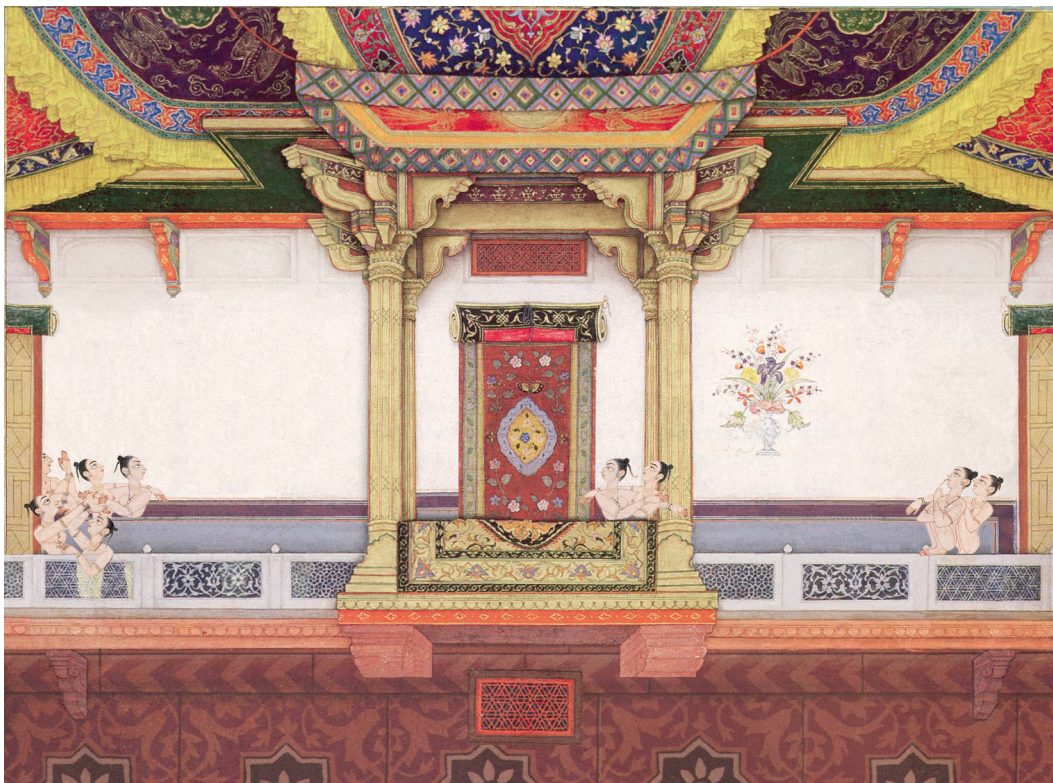


Fig.101.Shahzia Sikander,SpiNN,2003



Fig.102.Padshahnama, Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan, 1617



Fig.103.Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003



Fig.104.Krishna und die Mädchen



Fig.105.Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003



Fig.106.Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003



Fig.107. Solomon on his Flying Throne, Early 16th century

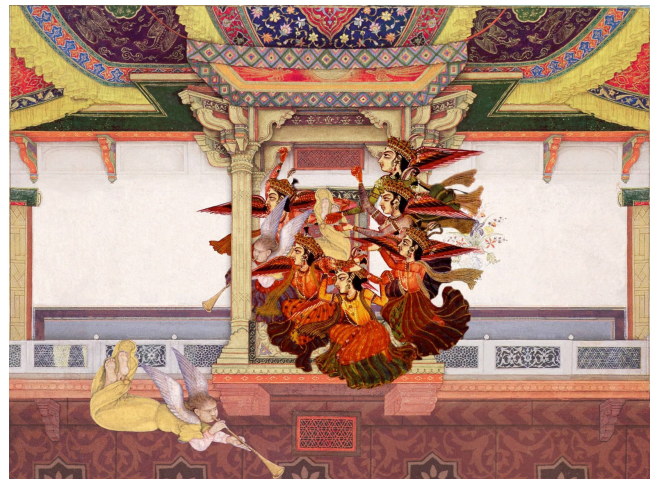


Fig.108.Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003



Fig.109.Flying Fairies Carry,DECCAN SCHOOL,1743.

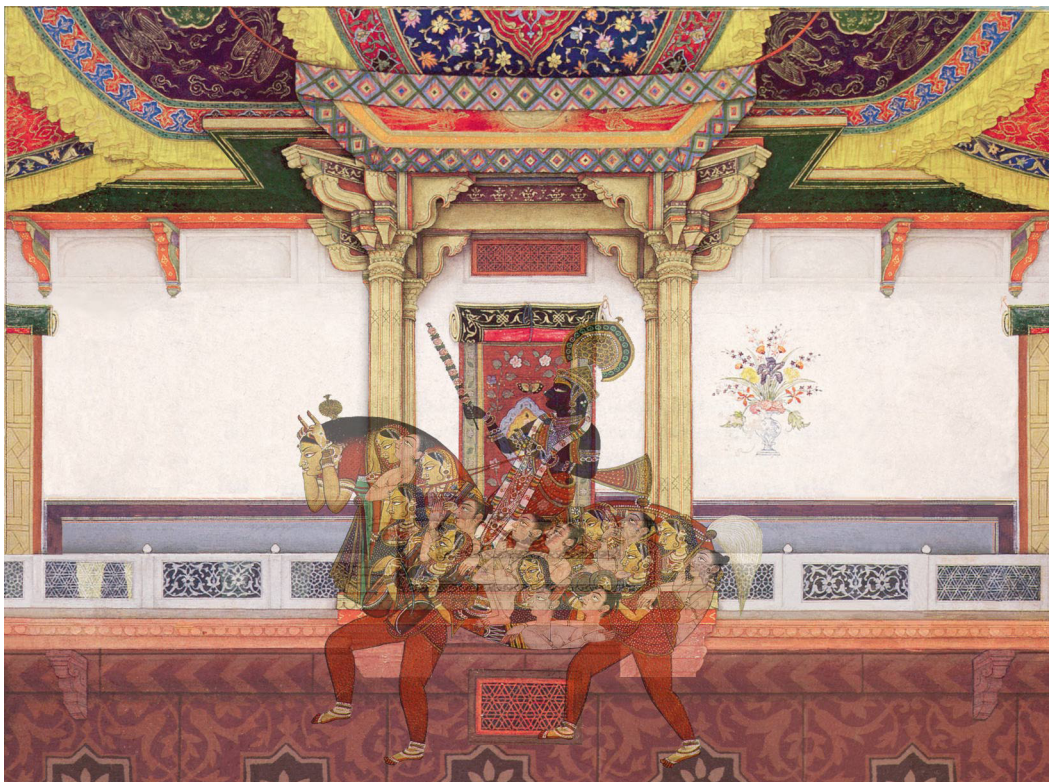


Fig.110.Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN, 2003



Fig.111.Nav Nari Kunjar,The Elephant of Nine Girls,Mid 19th century



Fig.112.Shahzia Sikander,
SpiNN, 2003

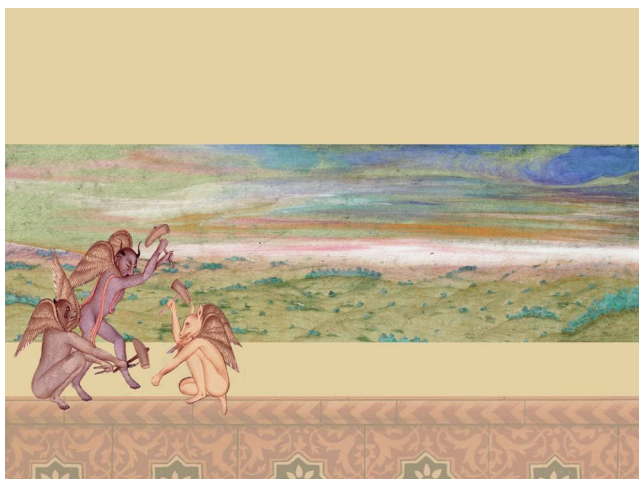


Fig.113.Shahzia Sikander,
SpiNN, 2003

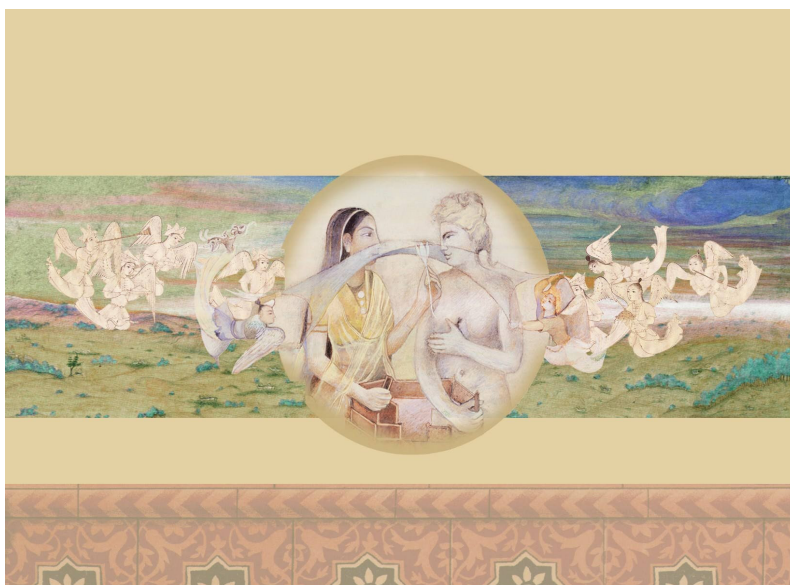


Fig.114. Shahzia Sikander,
SpiNN, 2003

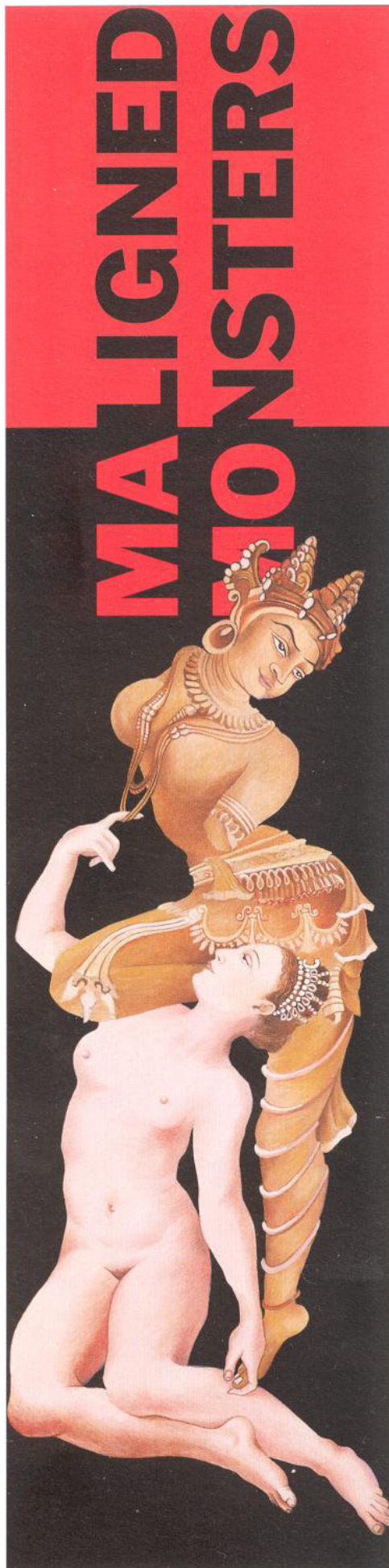


Fig.115. Shahzia Sikander, Much Maligned Monsters, 2000.



Fig. 116. The Descent from the Cross, detail, 1598



Fig. 117. Shahzia Sikander, SpiNN (15), 2003

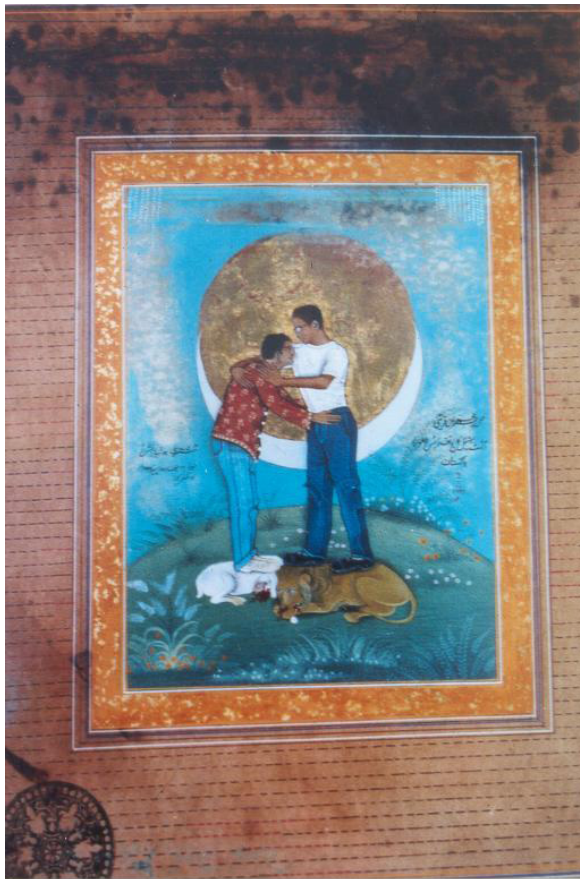


Fig.118.Imran Qureshi,
Beware the Buyers, 1999.



Fig.119.Album Painting,
Jahangir's Dream, 1618-22.



Fig.120.Imran Qureshi, Beware the Buyers II , 1999.



Fig.121.Imran Qureshi,
Aisha Stitches and Imran Wears it, ca. 1999.

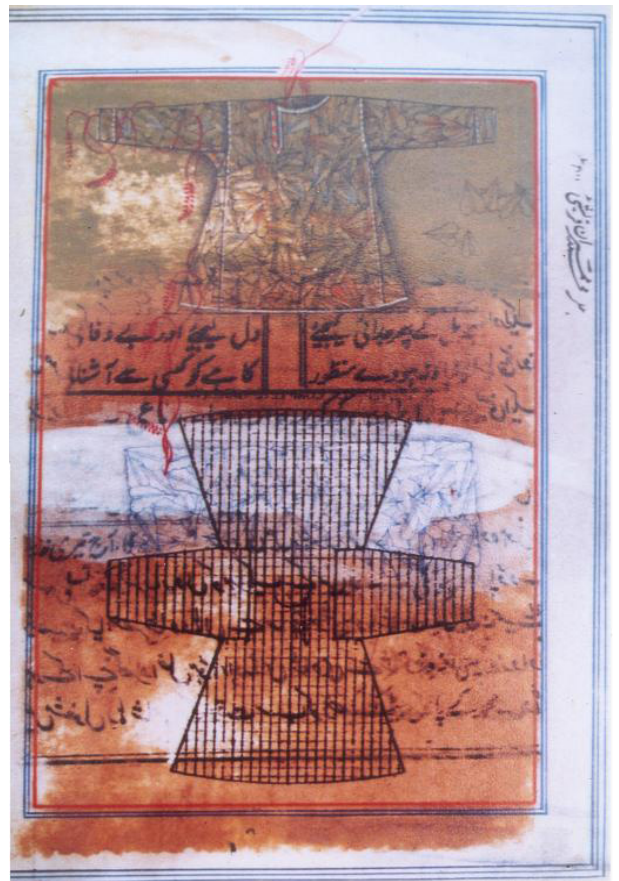


Fig.122.Imran Qureshi,
Aisha Stitches and Imran Wears it, 2000.

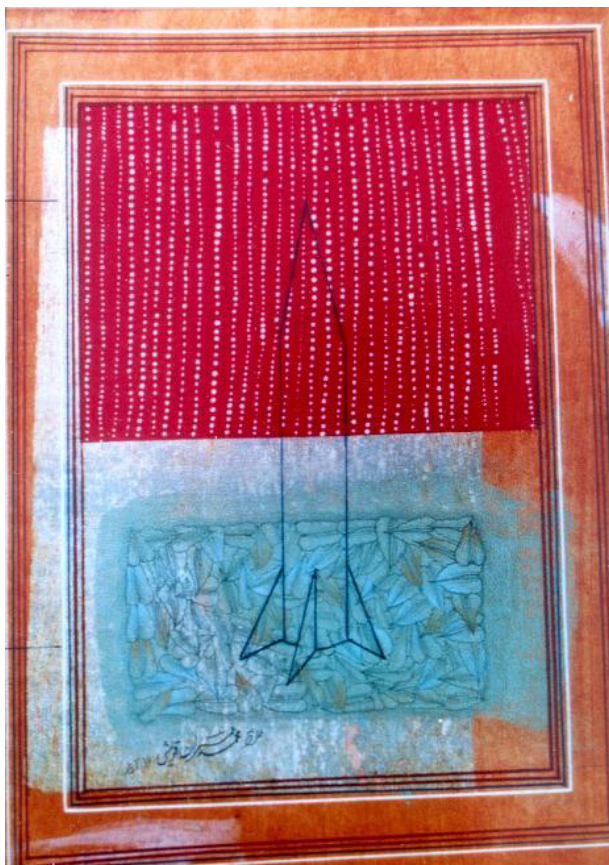


Fig.123..Imran Qureshi, Missile, ca. 1999.



Fig.124.Mandi, Rājā Shamsheer Sen of
Mandi, ca. 1760-70.

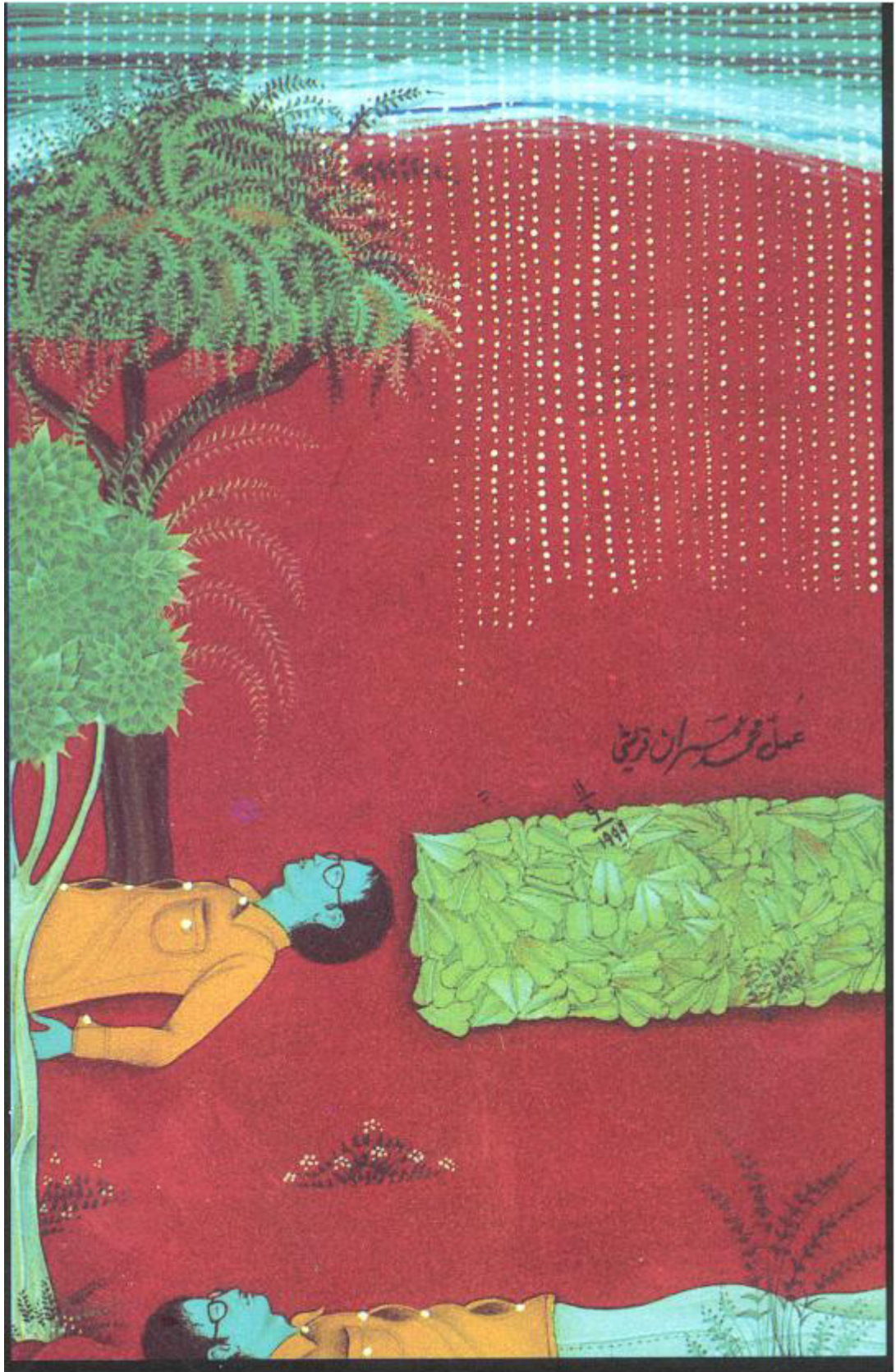


Fig.125.Imran Qureshi, A Lover waiting for his Beloved, 1999.

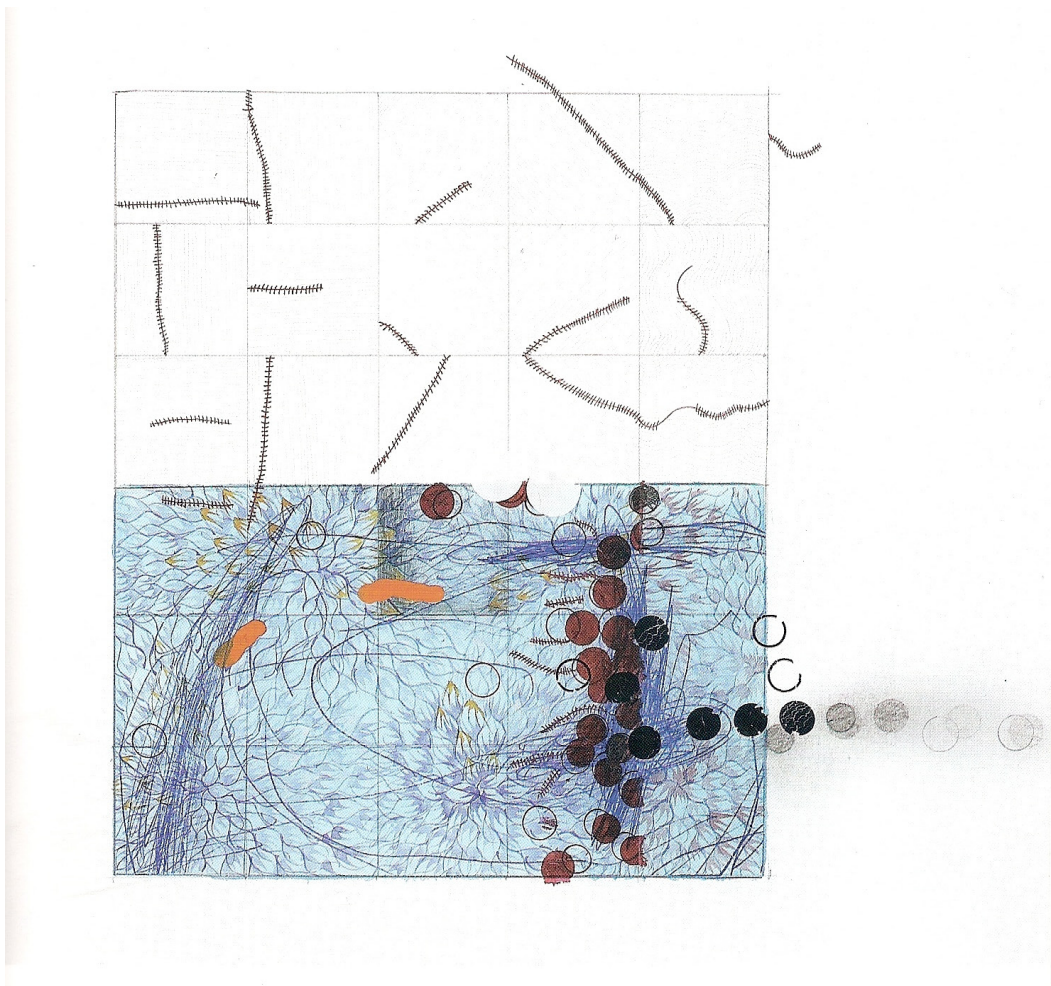


Fig.126.Muhammad Imran Qureshi,Inside Out,2006.



Fig.127.Imran Qureshi, Moderate Enlightenment, 2009



Fig.128.Imran Qureshi,
Moderate Enlightenment, 2009



Fig.129.Imran Qureshi,
Moderate Enlightenment, 2009

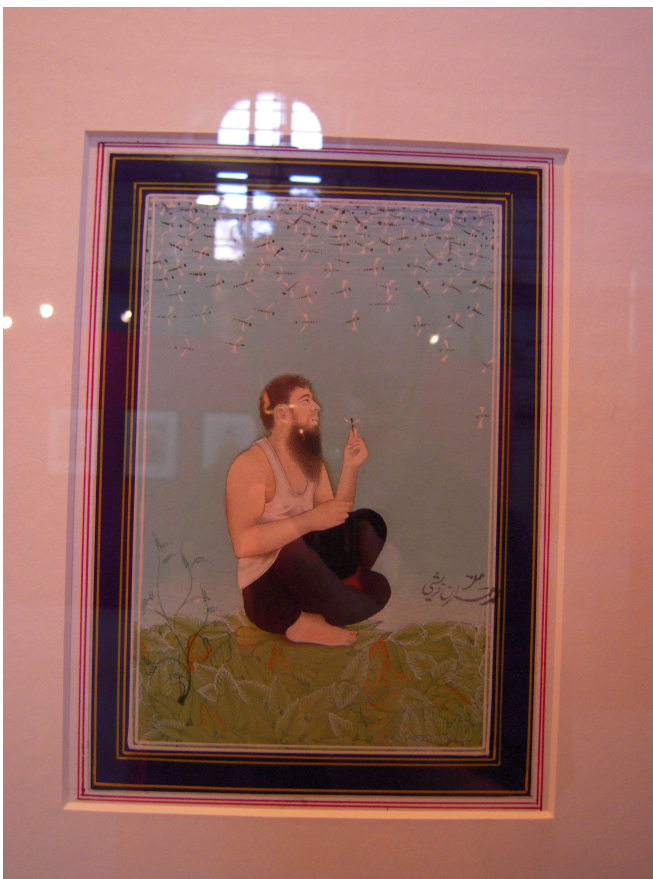


Fig.130.Imran Qureshi,
Moderate Enlightenment, 2009



Fig.131.Aisha Khalid,
Silence with pattern, 2000.



Fig.132.Aisha Khalid,
Silence with pattern, 2000.

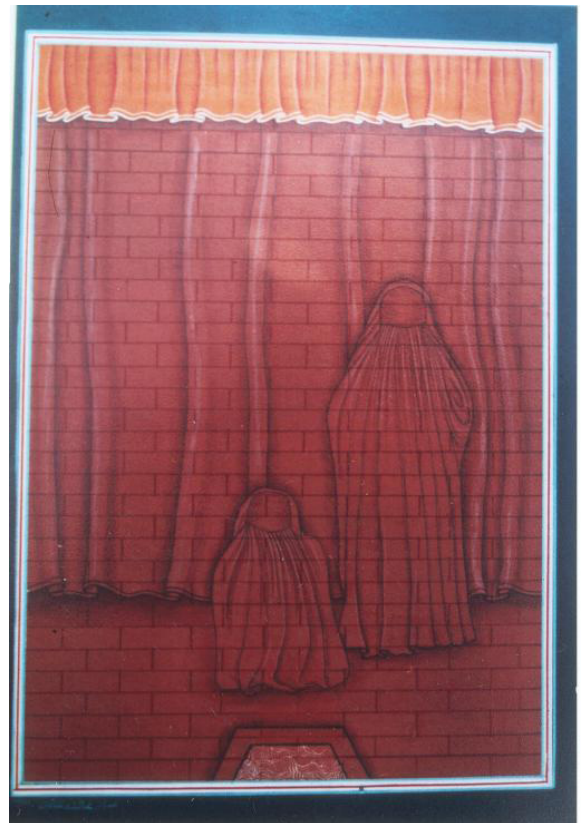


Fig.133.Aisha Khalid,
Behind the Curtain, 1999.

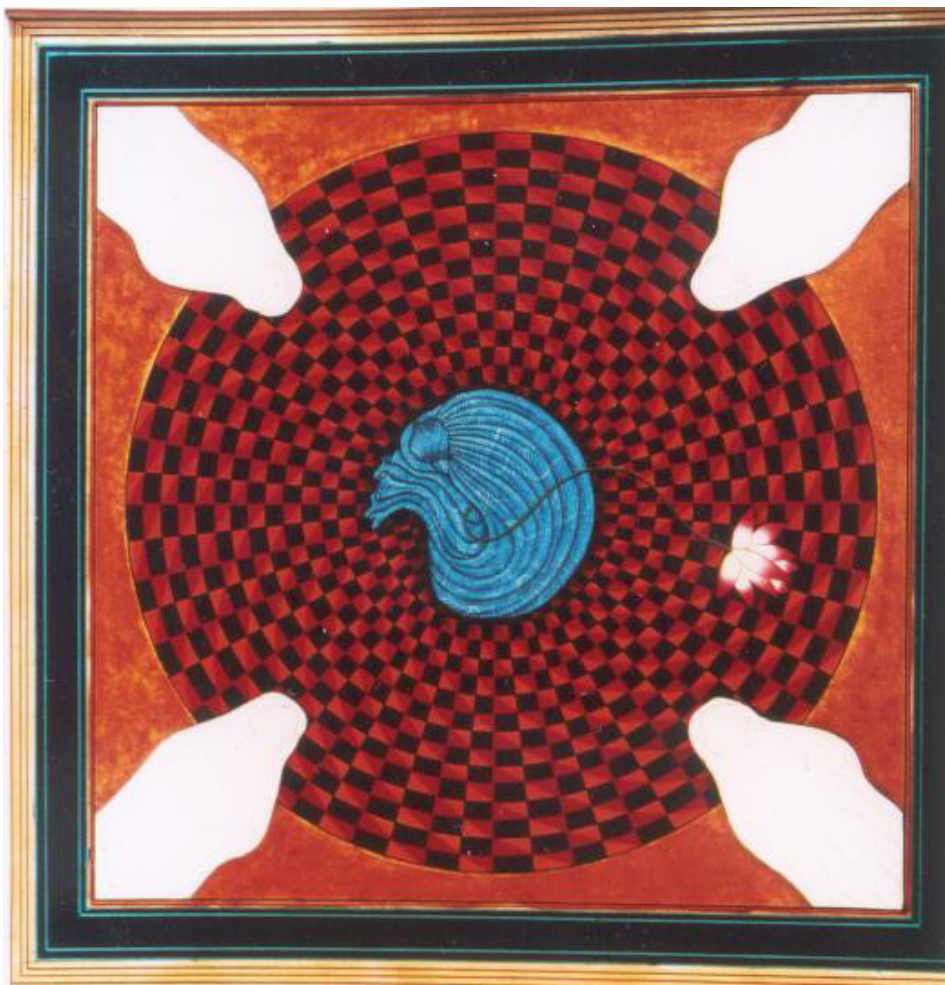


Fig.134.Aisha Khalid, Birth of Venus, 2001.

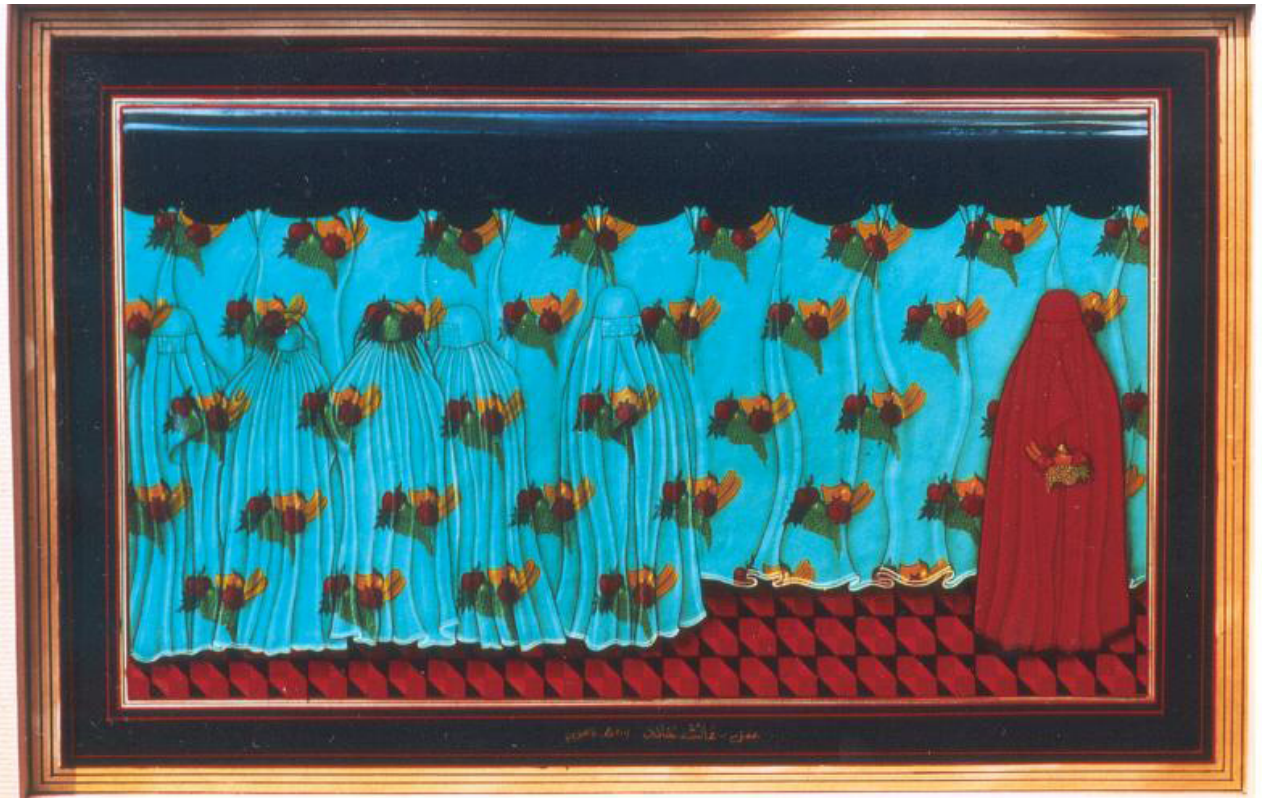


Fig.135. Aisha Khalid, Conversation II, 2000.



Fig.136. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Afghan women in a reception camp for fugitives in Iran, 2001.



Fig.137.Aisha Khalid, untitled, 2001.

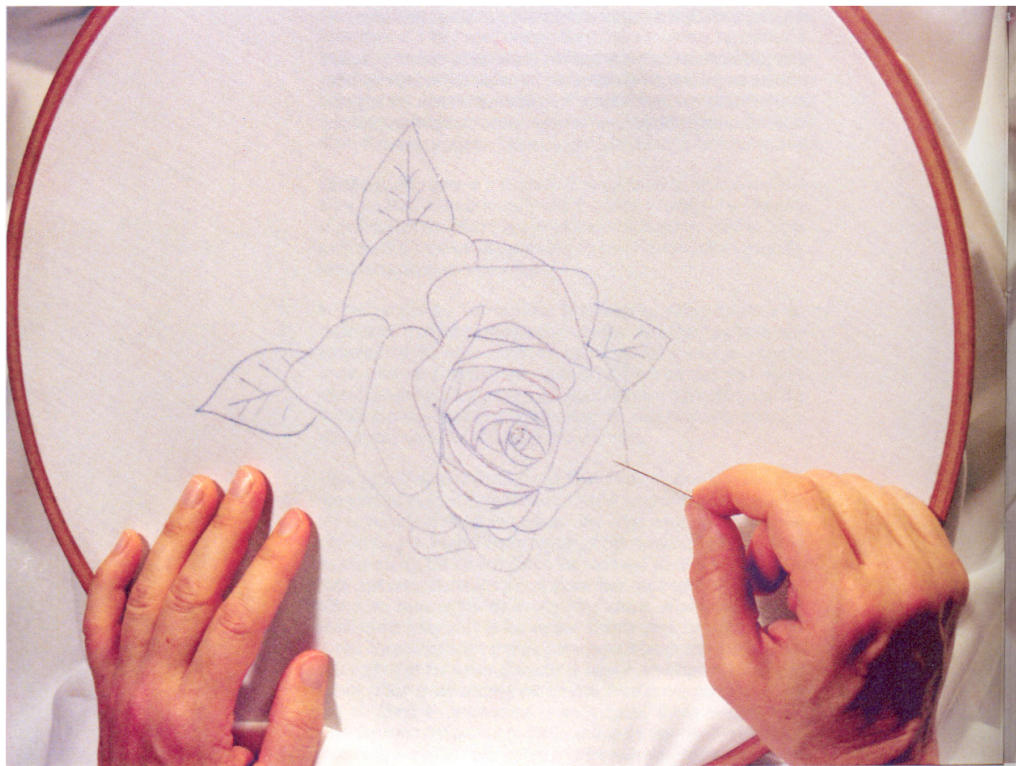


Fig.138.Aisha Khalid, Conversation, video still, 2002

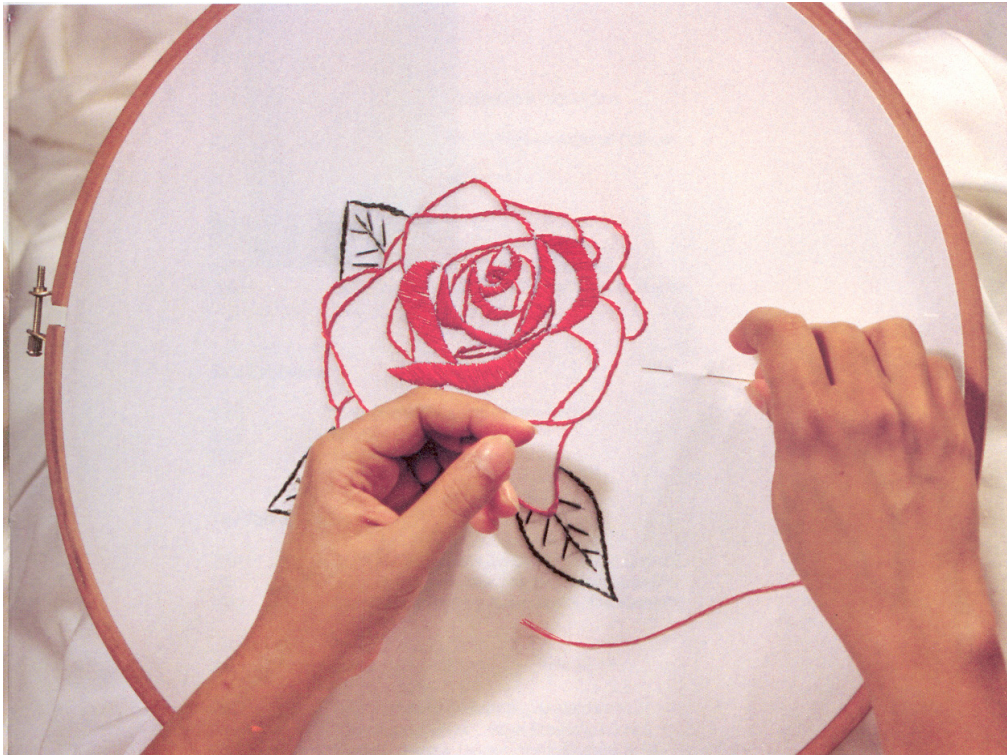


Fig.139.Aisha Khalid, Conversation, video still, 2002



Fig.140.Aisha Khalid,Barbed,2006

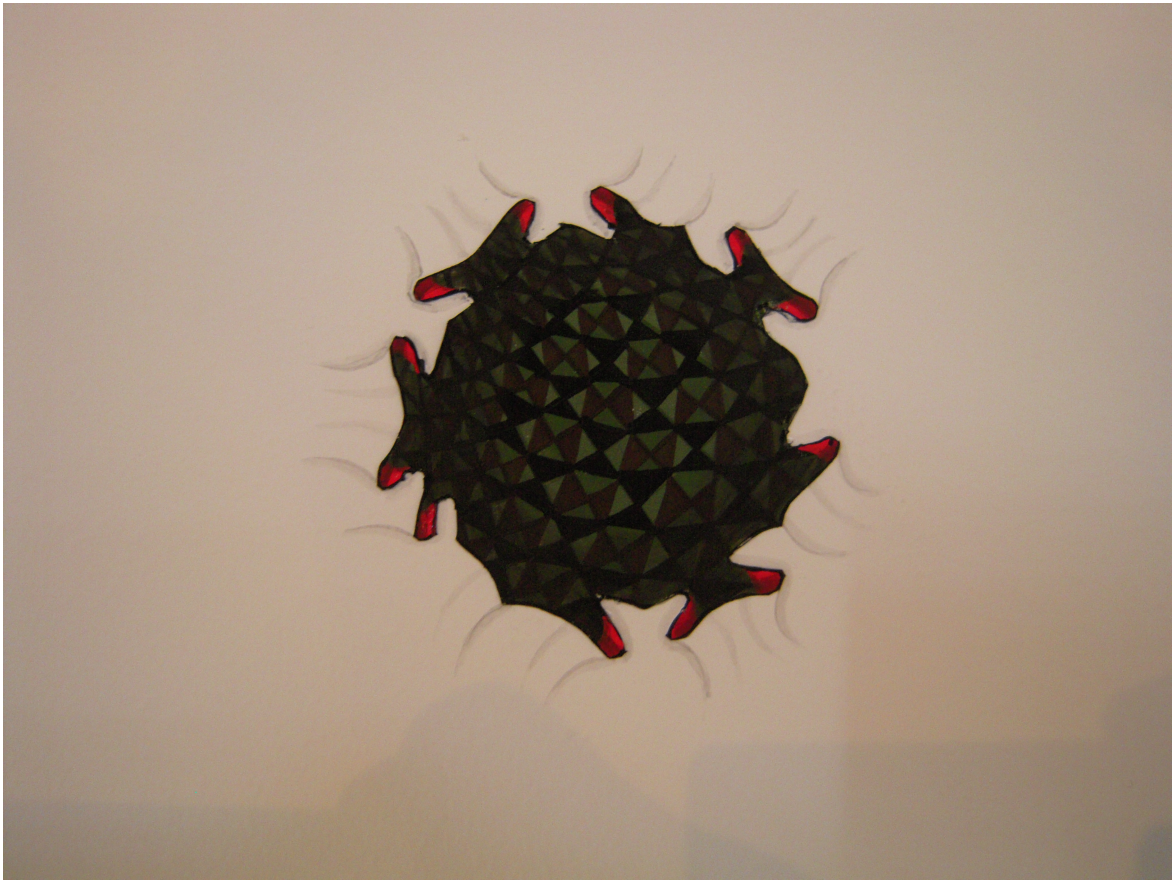


Fig.141. Aisha Khalid, Face It, 2009

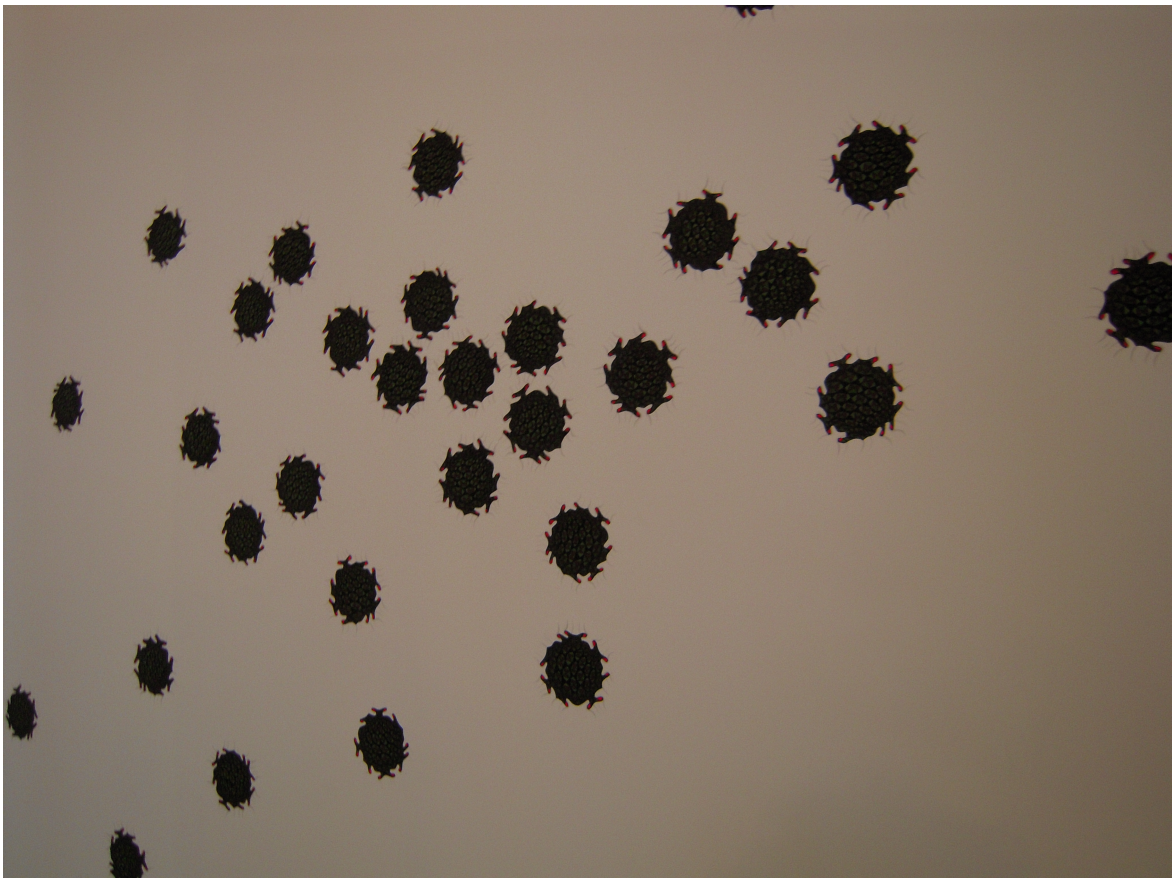


Fig.142. Aisha Khalid, Face It, 2009



Fig.143.Aisha Khalid, Face It, 2009



Fig.144.Aisha Khalid, Face It, 2009



Fig.145.Imran Qureshi, Leakage, 2009

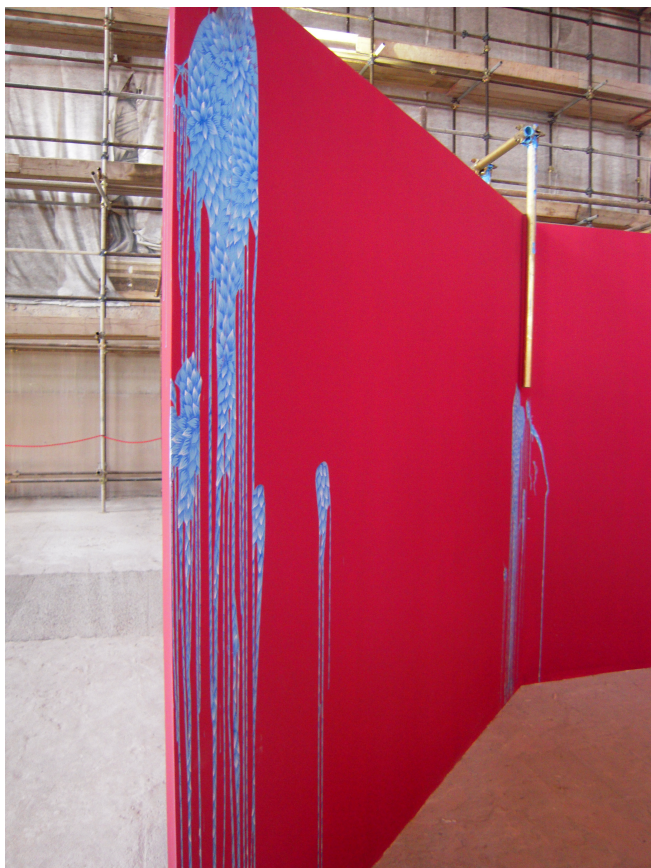


Fig.146.Imran Qureshi, Leakage, 2009

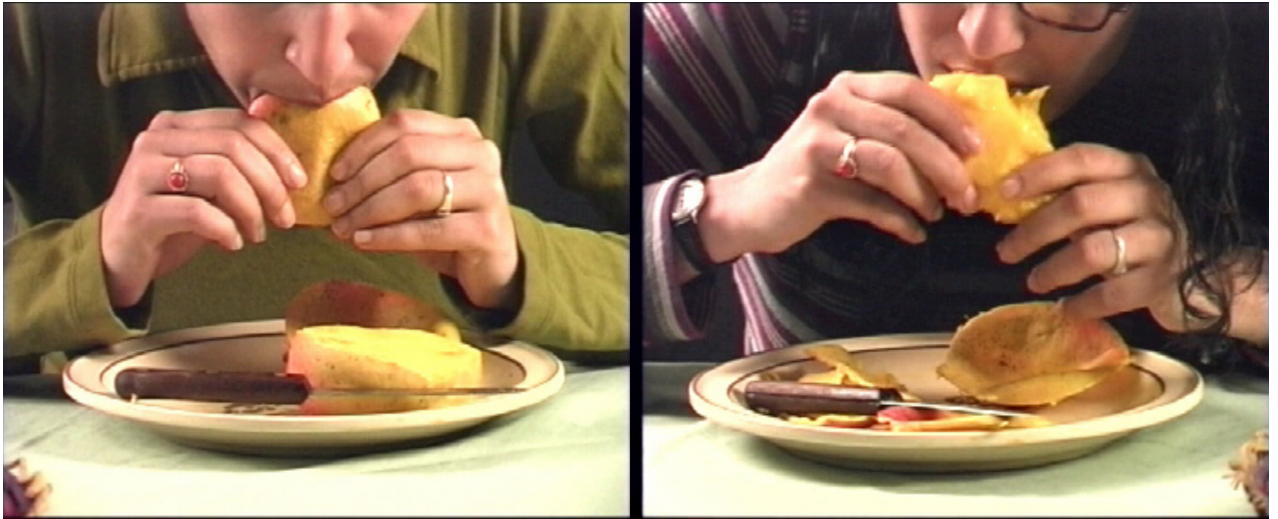


Fig.147.Bani Abidi, Mangoes, Video Still, 1999



Fig.148.Bani Abidi, The News, Video Still, 2001



Fig.149.Bani Abidi, The Ghost of Mohammad Bin Qasim, 2006



Fig.150.Bani Abidi, The BoyWho Got Tired of Posing, 2006



Fig.151.Bani Abidi, The Boy Who Got Tired of Posing, 2006



Fig.152.Bani Abidi, Karachi Series 1,
Jerry Fernandez, 7:45 pm, 21st August, 2008, Ramadan, Karachi, 2009

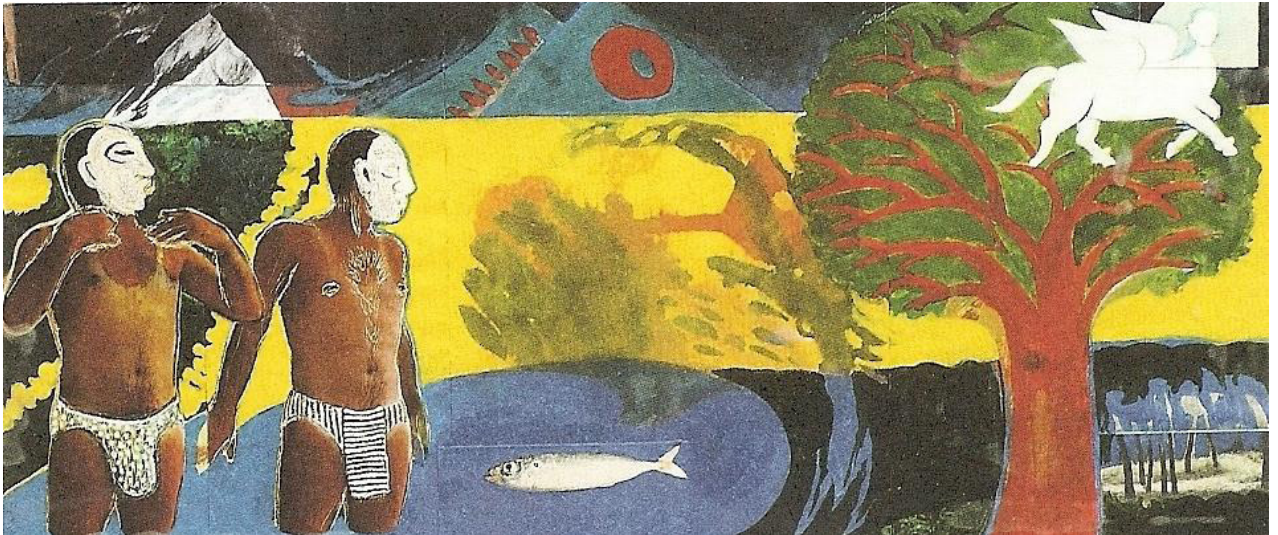


Fig.153.Anwar Saeed,We Sing and Recite Poetry Keeping the Heavens Awake,2000.

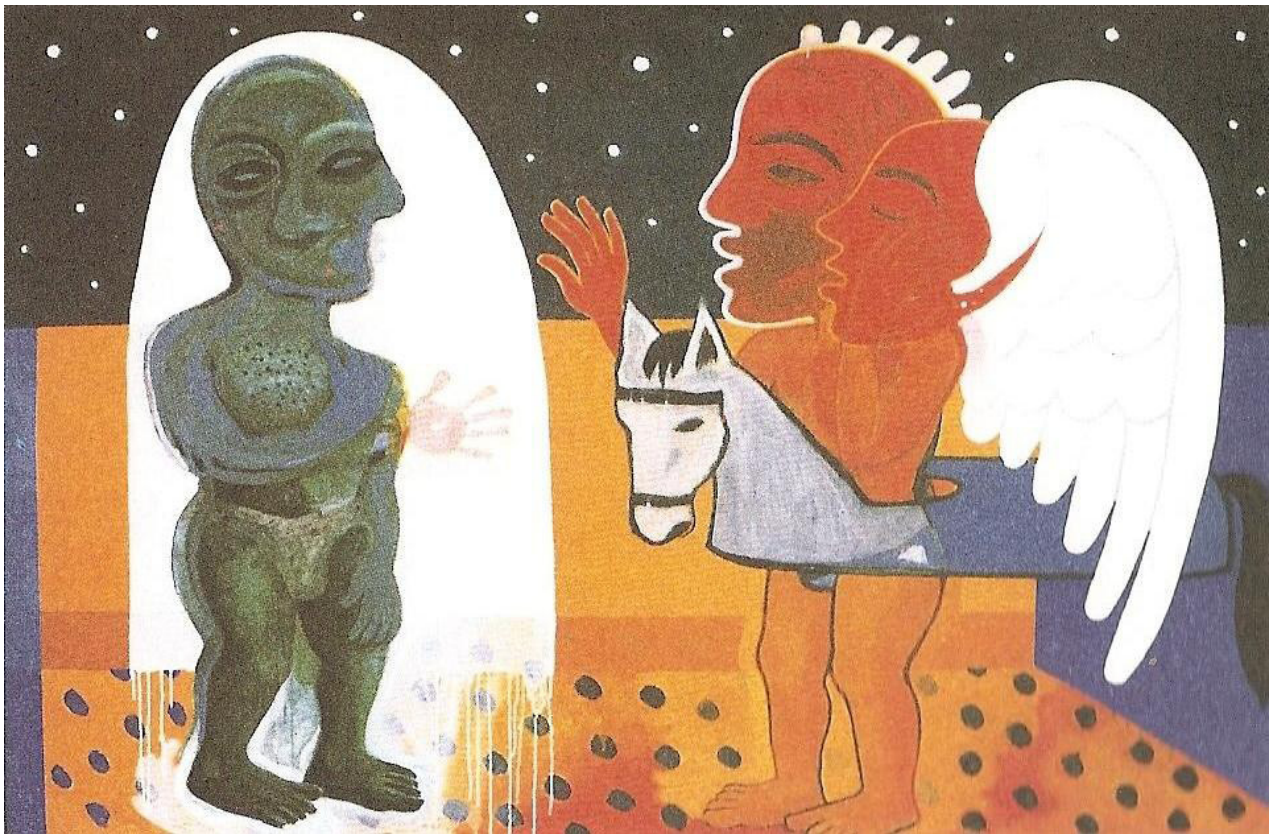


Fig.154.Anwar Saeed,Song for the Melting Ice,2002.



Fig.155.Nusra Latif Qureshi,Manifest Destiny,2003.

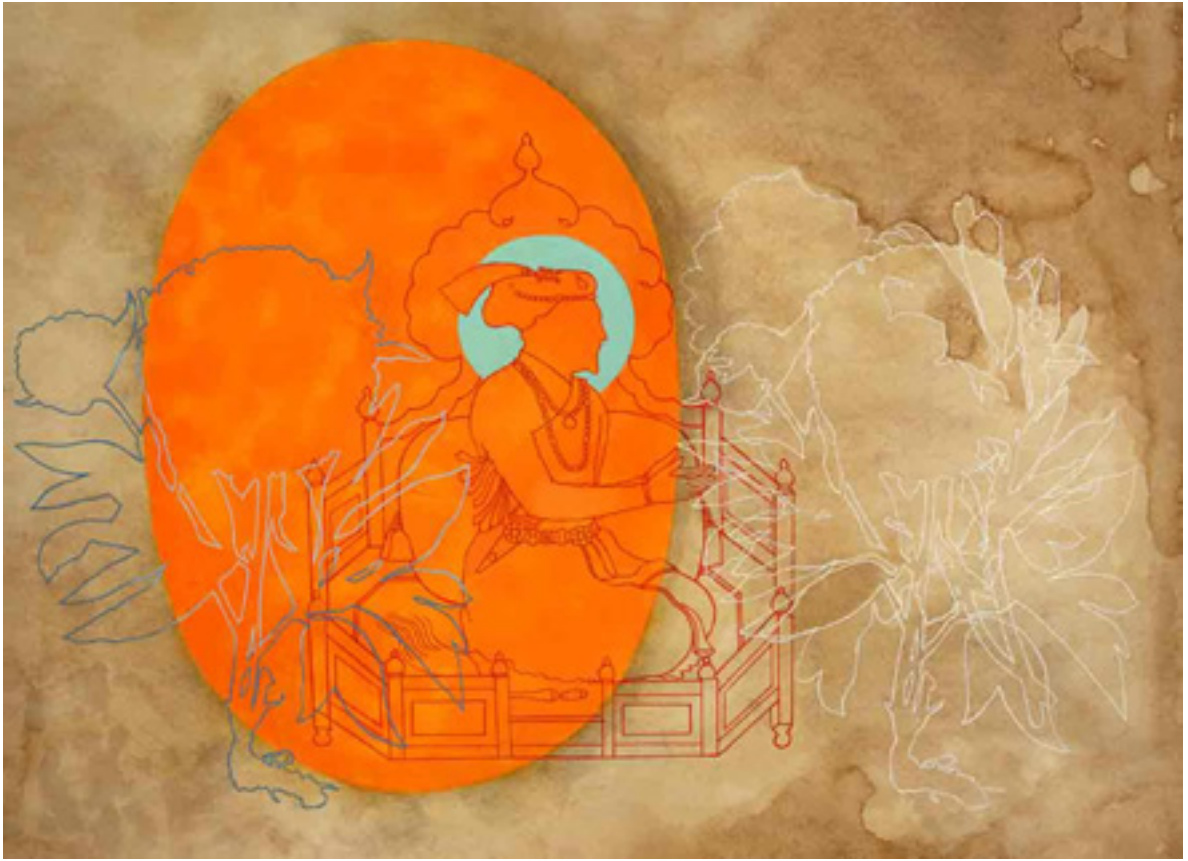


Fig.156.Nusra Latif Qureshi,Sites of Omission, 2003.



Fig.157.Nusra Latif Qureshi, Did You Come Here To Find History, 2009



Fig.158. Truck Art, A Pair of Eyes



Fig.159. Truck Art, Buraq

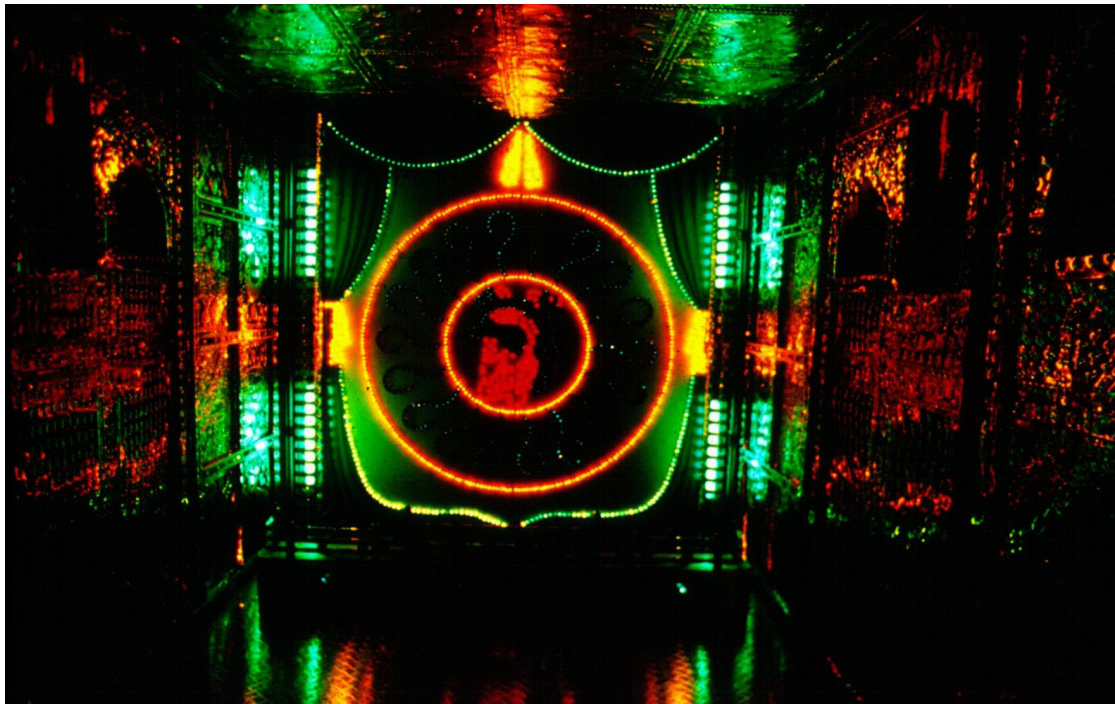


Fig.160.Heart Mahal, Detail, front, 1996

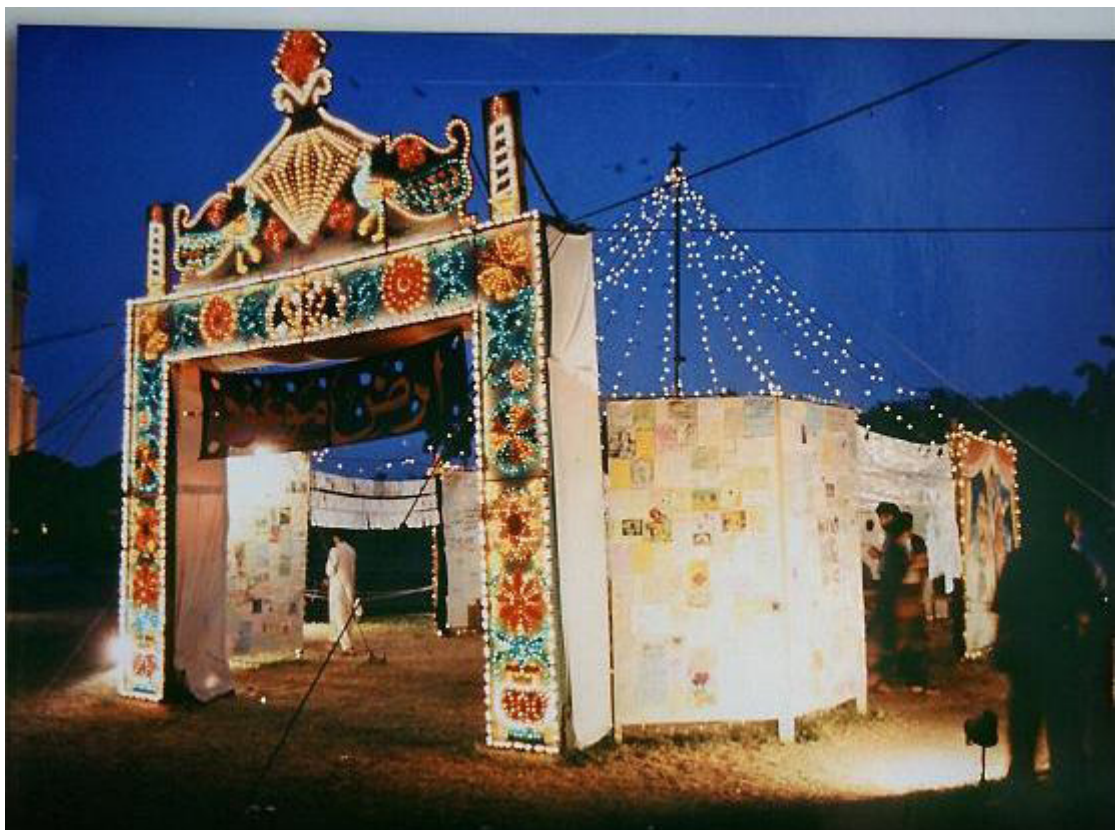


Fig.161 .Arz-E-Mauood,The promised Lands,1997.



Fig.162.Arz-E-Mauood,The promised Lands,1997.



Fig.163.Arz-E-Mauood,The promised Lands,1997.



Fig.164.David Alesworth, Probes, 2003-2008



Fig.165.David Alesworth,Adnan Madani,
Underneath the Moghul Arch, 2003



Fig.166.Durriya Kazi, Witness, 2008

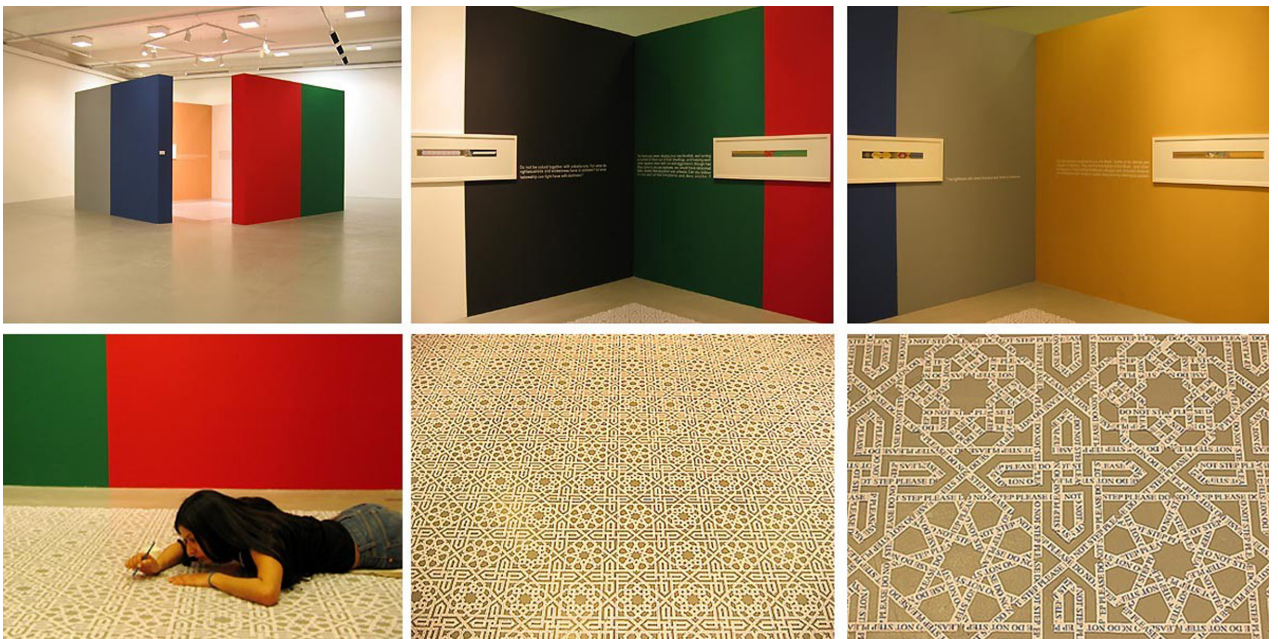


Fig.167.Hamra Abbas, Please do not step, 2004



Fig.168.Hamra Abbas, Lessons on Love

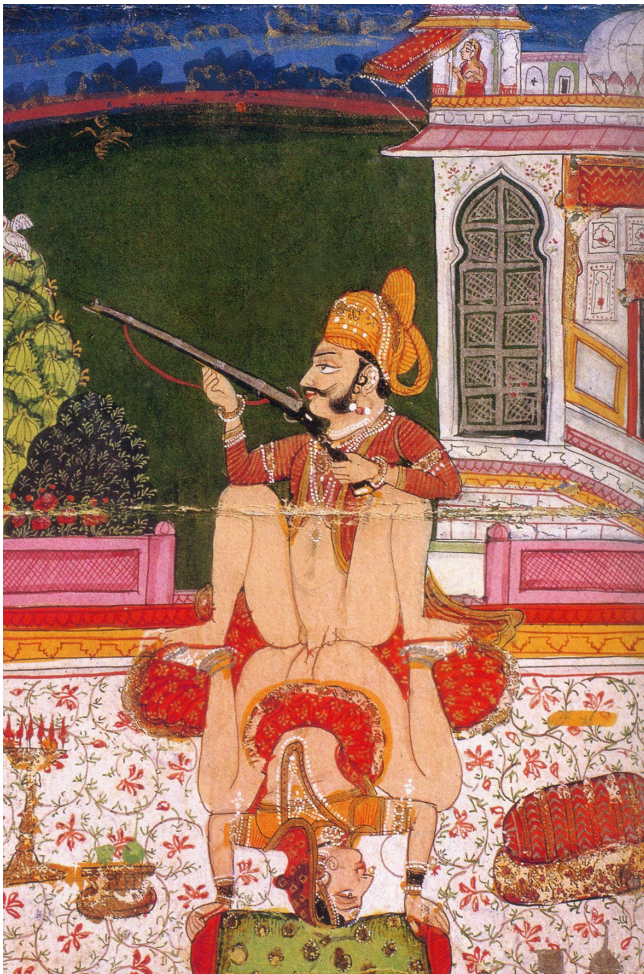


Fig.169. Kama Sutra



Fig.170.Faiza Butt, A Hero's Work Is Never Done, 2007



Fig.171.Rashid Rana, What is so Pakistani about this Painting,



Fig.172.Rashid Rana, This Picture Is Not at Rest,



Fig.173.Rashid Rana, All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade,

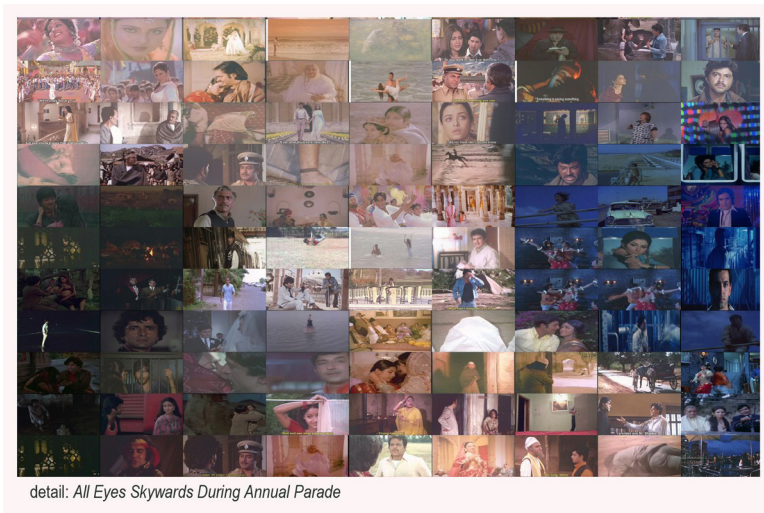


Fig.174.Rashid Rana, All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade, Detail

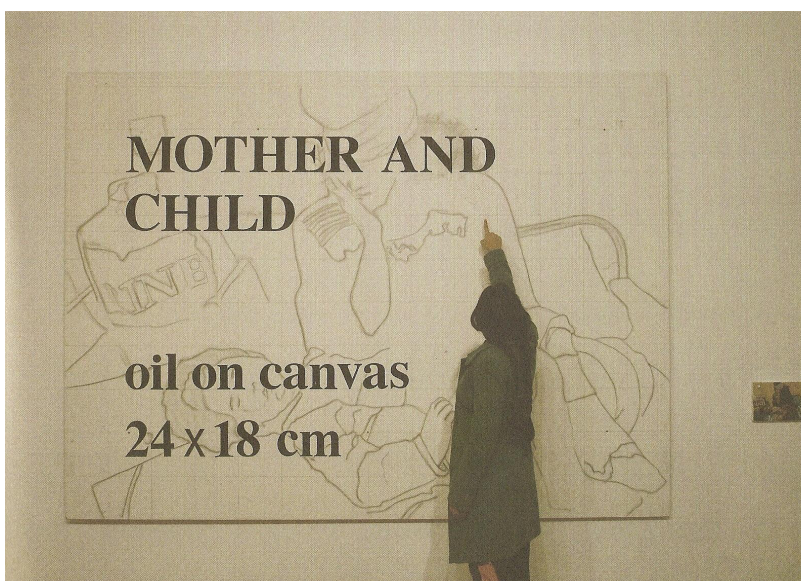


Fig.175.Ayaz Jikhio, Mother and Child, 2005.

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Fig.176.Mahbub Shah, Untitled



Fig.177.Huma Mulji, Art Vendor, 1999

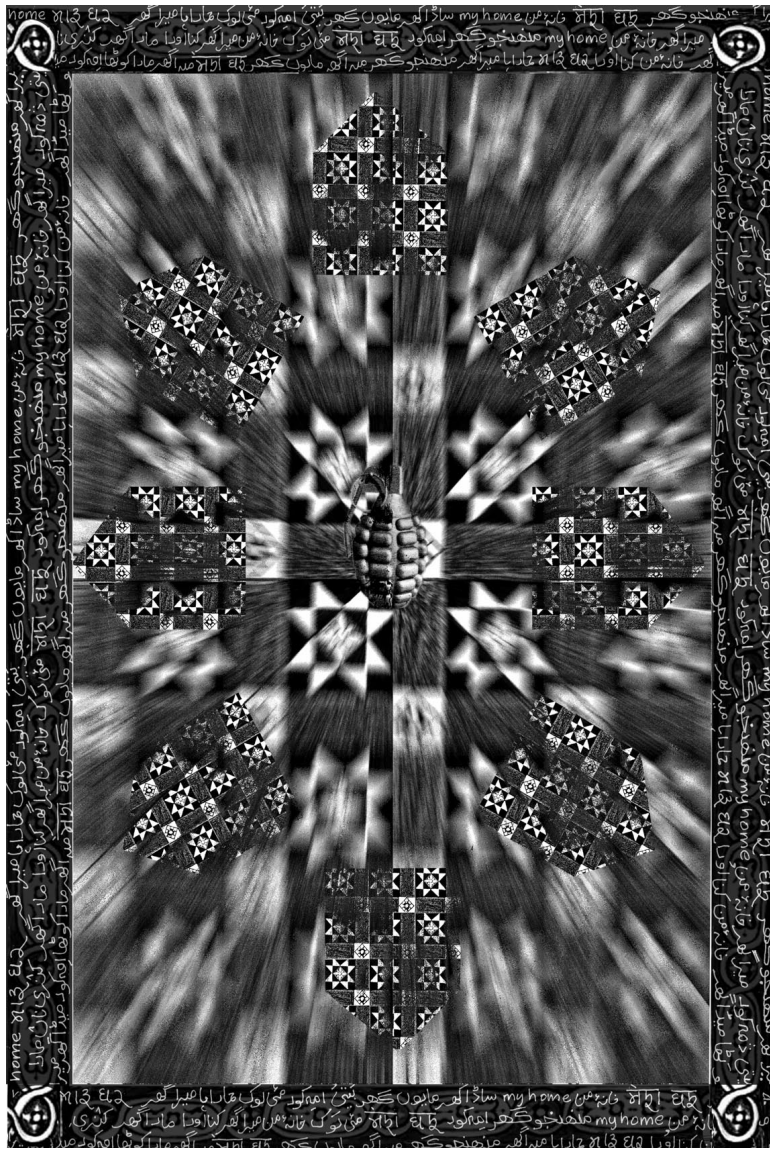


Fig.178.Huma Mulji, Mera Ghar, 2002- aar paar



Fig.179.Huma Mulji, But what is your Country Madame?



Fig.180.Huma Mulji,
Arabian Delight, 2008



Fig.181 Huma Mulji,
Housing Scheme, 2008



Fig.182.Adeela Suleman, Salma Sitara and Sisters Motor-
cycle Workshop, 2002



Fig.183.Adeela Suleman, Salma Sitara and Sisters Motorcycle Workshop, 2002



Fig.184.Naiza Khan, Homage to Hokusai, 2000



Fig.185.Naiza Khan, Henna Hands, 2000



Fig.186.Naiza Khan, Henna Hands, 2000



Fig.187.Naiza Khan, Exhale



Fig.188.Naiza Khan, Six Strands,

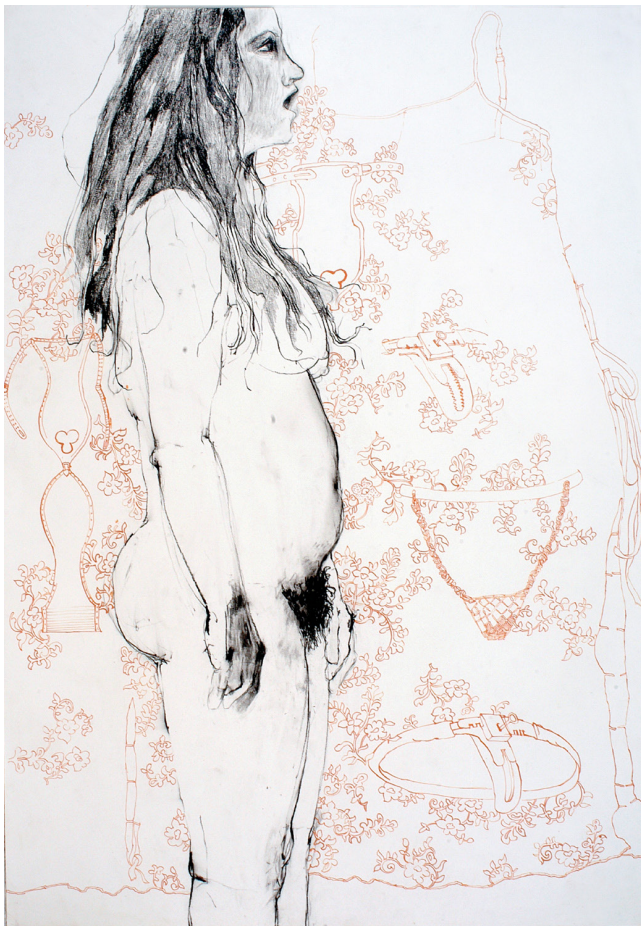


Fig.189.Naiza Khan, Dream-1996, 2002



Fig.190.Naiza Khan, Seive-II, 2002



Fig.191.Naiza Khan, Straight Jacket



Fig.192.Naiza Khan, Straight Jacket

